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THE INDEPENDENT

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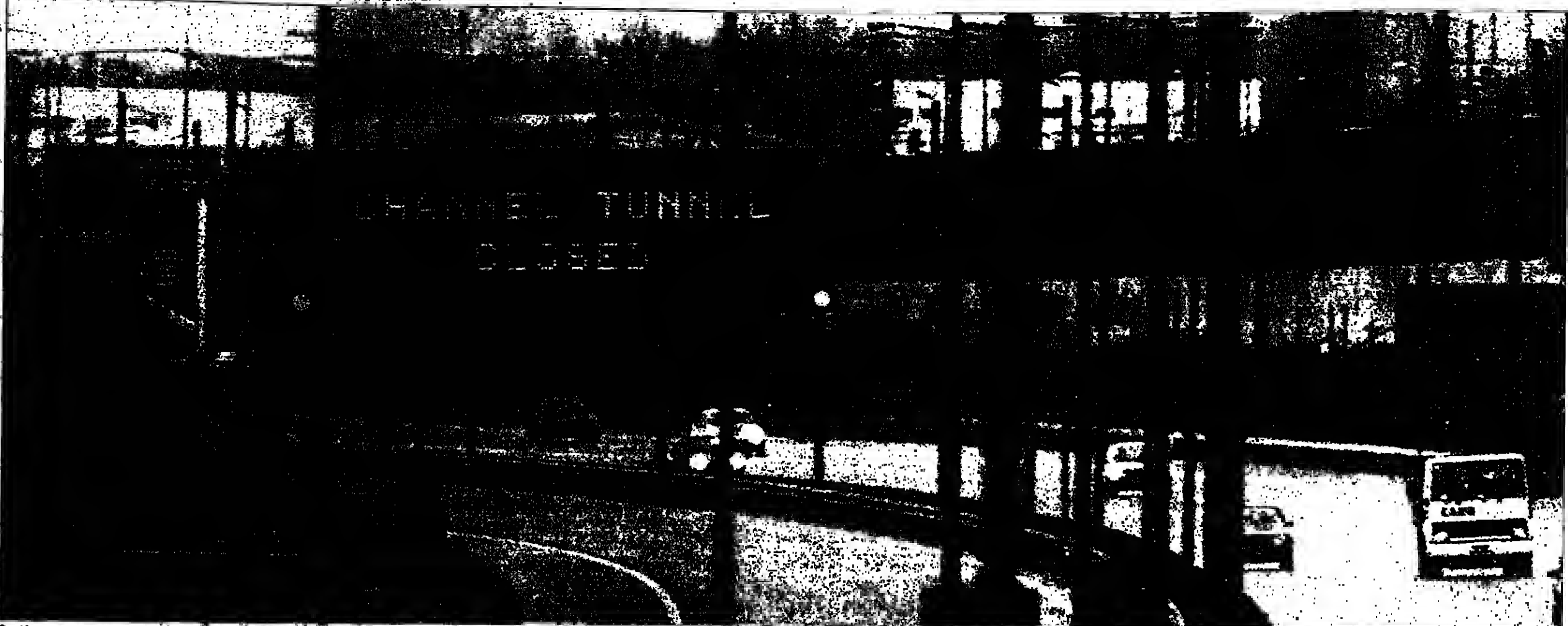
WEATHER: Cold and windy

(R4SP) 40p

Today: School league tables full 12-page guide inside
Tomorrow: Education+ with 16 pages of appointments

The Tabloid
Bridget Jones: revenge is sweet

Darkness at the end of the tunnel



On the wrong track: The sign above the M20 near the turn-off for the Channel Tunnel yesterday. All 34 people aboard a train from Calais to Folkestone were injured when fire broke out

Christian Wolmar
Mary Dejevsky
James Cusick and
Michael Harrison

The Channel Tunnel has lost its innocence and may well have lost any hope of financial survival. Promoted as the safest form of travel between Britain and Europe, it suffered the fire that everyone feared: a conflagration which although claiming no lives, has dimmed hopes of light ever emerging at the end of the Channel tunnel's short but troubled existence.

Monday night's fire may not have caused any deaths, but it was a very serious event which will prevent any trains using the tunnel at all until late today at the earliest and will close one of the two main train tunnels for several weeks, causing severe disruption to both Le Shuttle and Eurostar services. All 34 passengers suffered from the effects of smoke inhalation and several lorry drivers described how they choked in the smoke and were convinced that they were going to die.

Last night there were still fears that poisonous gases had not been completely cleared, further delaying repair work although the undamaged part of the train had been taken out at Folkestone. The fire started near the back of the 700m-long 8.45 train from Calais to Folkestone on Monday night. The cause is as yet unknown, although investigators are concentrating on a lorry thought to have been carrying polystyrene. "It seems like spontaneous combustion," one source close to Eurotunnel said.

Inside
It was like a tomb: I thought I'd never get out alive.
Fear of the future.
The strange story of the fire story.
Travel chaos.
Pages 2 and 3

There are three separate inquiries underway into the causes of the fire and the safety implications for the future running of the tunnel. Inside the tunnel, there is a sad scene of damage which Eurotunnel's bosses must have hoped they would never see. The fire brought down lumps of concrete from the ceiling, destroyed a portion of the line backing the rails and ruined trackside equipment, particularly the communications gear which will be very difficult to re-establish. Fifteen lorries were destroyed and five wagons badly damaged. However, engineering experts say that the structure itself is very robust and unlikely to have been damaged.

The financial damage is going to be very serious. The Eurotunnel president, Patrick Ponsolle, conceded that while insurers will pay for most of the physical damage, the loss of public confidence could take longer to restore, however well the safety procedures worked. "This was a serious incident but it has enabled us to show the quality of our safety procedures. We believe that it is through this incident that our number one priority, the safety of passengers, has been fully demonstrated."

An inquiry by the intergovernmental commission has been launched and Sir George Young, Secretary of State for Transport, promised in Parliament yesterday that his findings would be made public. Eurotunnel admits things will never be the same again. John Noulton, public affairs director, said: "Inquiries like this usually lead to changes."

Christian who was flogged for falling in love with a Muslim

By Robert Fisk

Beirut - Grotesque. Unprecedented. Bizarre. Though true, the journalists' adjectives cannot quite define the latest excess of a Muslim court. Yet Mona Ghalib's voice was determined down the phone line from her cell in the United States. What else would you expect from a Muslim woman whose Lebanese Christian husband is waiting to be flogged after legal sentencing in the Gulf for the "offence" of marrying her? "When I sleep, I dream sleep - all I see is the sight of my husband being whipped," Mrs Ghalib told me yesterday.



Image of Islam: A woman wears the traditional chador
husband's defence lawyer, he wouldn't talk to me," Mrs Ghalib says, the indignation in her voice scarcely suppressed. "He said 'Why are you calling me? You're not his wife any more. I could not believe it.'"

It is only a few months since an Egyptian court ordered a university professor and his wife to divorce on the grounds that his Islamic research work constituted "apostasy". But the Ghalibs have neither the power nor the influence to stand up to a government in the Arab Gulf. Mr Ghalib was helping to finance his wife's university course but, she says, she has now been forced to sleep in churches and friends' homes for lack of funds. Her personal appeal to Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan - the

Golden days back for City high-rollers

Peter Rodgers
Financial Editor

The fat cats of the utilities have been left in the shade by immense rewards for dealers in the City, where bonuses and profit sharing on the Stock Exchange soared almost £100m to a record £315m in the year to June. The increase, announced by the Exchange yesterday, was the back of a huge rise in profits among 250 member firms - to £719m - after a spectacular boom year in the stock market.

For the City as a whole, the lucrative rewards of working on the Exchange are believed to be merely the tip of a far larger iceberg. Many hundreds of millions more in bonuses are likely to be paid out across the Square Mile this year. The race to recruit the top people has led some firms to offer guaranteed bonuses to new staff, regardless of performance in their first few years. But there has been rising anxiety at the Bank of England and among regulators in charge of policing the City, such as the Securities and Investments Board.

QUICKLY
New knife powers
Sweeping new police powers to stop and search suspects, and legislation to restrict the promotion of Rambo-style knives were proposed by the government. They were condemned as Draconian by civil liberties groups. Page 8

Troops on hold
The British and US governments changed their minds about sending ground forces to Zaire, throwing the size, scope, and even the existence of the proposed international relief into confusion. Other countries are still prepared to go ahead, but are rethinking. Page 18

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news

'It was like a tomb down there:

Investigation will focus on decision to halt train and lead victims through tunnel

Christian Wolmar

The investigation underway into the Channel Tunnel fire will concentrate on whether all safety procedures were followed and in particular try to discover why the train was halted.

Safety rules – different for Eurostar and tourist shuttles because they are enclosed and drivers travel with their cars – outline three alternatives for freight shuttle trains.

The first is for the train to continue as fast as possible to an exit. If the fire is too strong, then normal procedure would be for the chief de train to dis-

connect the locomotive and the club car – where lorry drivers rest – from the remainder of the train and head off fast down the track. That would leave emergency teams, who travel down the smaller service tunnel, to deal with the fire.

The third alternative, which happened on Monday night, is for the train to stop with the club car next to one of the entrances into the service tunnel. These are located at intervals of 375 metres.

Eurotunnel is confident that it has devised set procedures for ensuring that fires can be dealt with easily and an incident such as Monday's was not unexpected. John Noulton, the com-

pany's public affairs director, said that initially it was thought there would be a fire once every nine years, but "nowadays, vehicles are much more complex and are at greater risk of starting to burn than old bangers were twenty years ago".

However, the inquiry will have to look at why neither of the first two safety options were taken and why choking lorry drivers had to be evacuated through the tunnel.

The tunnel was designed to be safer than other channel crossings and the risks are said to be the same as for any other rail journey. In a 300-page safety document, Eurotunnel sets out the chance of being

killed on a shuttle train as 5.6 per 100 million transits, about 25 times safer than on an aeroplane. An accident in which ten or more people are killed should not happen more than once in every 50 years, and one in which 100 or more people die every 1,100 years.

In some ways, the emphasis on safety has been responsible for the near-bankruptcy of Eurotunnel. As initial plans were being drawn up in the late Eighties, a succession of disasters – such as the Zeebrugge ferry sinking, and rail accidents at Clapham and King's Cross – heightened awareness of the safety risks surrounding a Channel tunnel.

Safety considerations were largely responsible for a railway being built, rather than Mrs Thatcher's dream of a 50-kilometre road tunnel.

But the safety requirements became increasingly onerous, an issue that is still the subject of a legal dispute between Eurotunnel and the British and French governments over the imposition of extra costs which sometimes seemed to cover minute risks.

Privately, though, Eurotunnel must be rather relieved that such onerous requirements were forced on the company, given that it has emerged from its first major incident with no deaths or serious injuries.

Design risks were known about

Michael Harrison

If the Channel Tunnel had an Achilles' heel then it was always going to be its fleet of freight shuttles. Although they have proved to be the workhorse of the system, transporting some 1,500 lorries a day between Folkestone and Calais, a question mark has always hung over their safety because of the semi-open design.

There are usually 28 wagons to each freight shuttle.

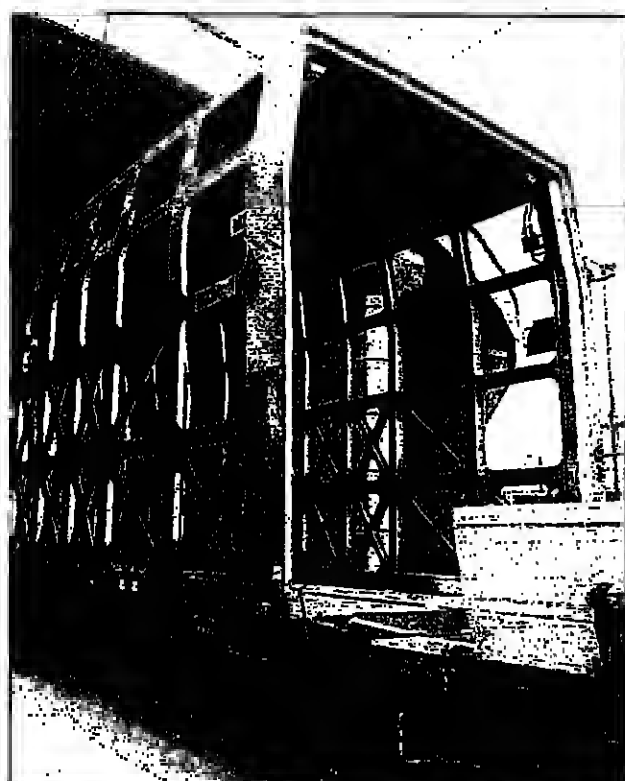
The original intention was to design the individual wagons so that they were fully enclosed just as the passenger shuttles are. Drivers would then be able to remain in their cabs for the 35-minute journey and drive off immediately at the other end.

The Anglo-French Inter-Governmental Safety Authority objected, however, on safety grounds. It insisted that drivers travel instead in a separate amenity carriage and asked Eurotunnel to modify its design.

Eurotunnel soon discovered that there were pressing reasons other than safety for not going ahead with a closed carriage design – weight, cost and operational efficiency.

The company discovered that, together with the weight of the lorries themselves, a closed wagon design would place more strain on the shuttles than they could bear.

It also discovered that the cost would be excessive. When



Open-sided freight car of the type carrying the lorry that caught fire. The structure has raised questions about fire risk

construction of the tunnel began in autumn 1987, the cost of the entire fleet of freight and passenger shuttles was put at £252m. Within three years that figure had ballooned to £603m.

By that time Eurotunnel had abandoned the original design and opted for the semi-open design based on the Alpine rail tunnels where passengers, cars and freight have been carried since the 1960s without incident.

The change in tack prompted immediate concern. The Kent fire brigade warned of the dangers of fire being able to spread rapidly from one freight wagon to another. The Commons Select Committee on Home Affairs voiced concern.

Eurotunnel pressed ahead, however, with its design. Fire and safety tests were carried out at two locations – in Italy where the manufacturer of the wagons, Fiat Breda, has its own test-bed,

and in Hammerfest in northern Norway where one completed freight shuttle was fire-tested in a specially built tunnel.

Finally in October, 1993, the Inter-Governmental Safety Authority announced that it had no objections to the semi-open shuttle design.

By that time, however, Eurotunnel had already placed advance orders for the fleet, a move that angered MPs on the home affairs committee.

Eurotunnel is now buying a further 16 freight shuttle wagons and two entire freight shuttles. This time the order has been placed with a Belgian manufacturer, Arbel, because, Eurotunnel says, its bid was a third lower than the price charged by Fiat Breda. The eventual price will depend, however, on whether Eurotunnel is forced to re-design its entire fleet of freight shuttles.

Fear the key to future of company

Michael Harrison

Two big financial worries now face Eurotunnel – does the fire threaten attempts to reschedule the project's £5.7bn debt mountain and how badly will it affect future revenues?

The fate of the tunnel operator hangs on the answer to the first. The future of the tunnel itself depends on the second.

To take revenues first, it is clear that there will be a marked impact in the short term, with capacity temporarily cut to a third of normal levels. Eurotunnel had been forecasting revenues of £450m this year and stock market analysts had been even more bullish, pencilling in £490m.

With one of the two running tunnels likely to be out of action for six to eight weeks, which will include the important Christmas period, and the remaining service subject to limitations, revenues will clearly suffer.

Eurotunnel was already expected to lose £700m this year.

The longer-term impact is harder to gauge since it will depend crucially on the travelling public's sentiment.

Images of smouldering trains in undersea tunnels and accounts of choking travellers emerging from dense smoke and "blow-torch like heat" resonate. All Eurotunnel's soothing words may not be enough.

The financial community, however, taken a remarkably sanguine view of the threat to the tunnel. "Frankly I don't regard the incident as a high priority," said one of Eurotunnel's senior bankers. "Sooner or later this was bound to happen but

ask yourself how many ferries caught fire last year. Knee-jerk politics seems to be the vogue at the moment and I expect there will be a degree of that, but as an informed observer I do not think there will be any impact."

Jeff Summers, an analyst with the debt-trading agency Klesh and Co, which has been one of Eurotunnel's severest critics, said: "For the long term, provided this is a single incident then I doubt whether it will change the habits of the travelling public at all. If it were otherwise nobody would fly in aeroplanes or take ferry crossings."

In the short term, however, Eurotunnel could not have picked a worse moment. There is a difficult round of financial restructuring to complete. A lot of banks will take the view that this incident will lead to a lower revenues and high bottom-line losses and that will affect sentiment.

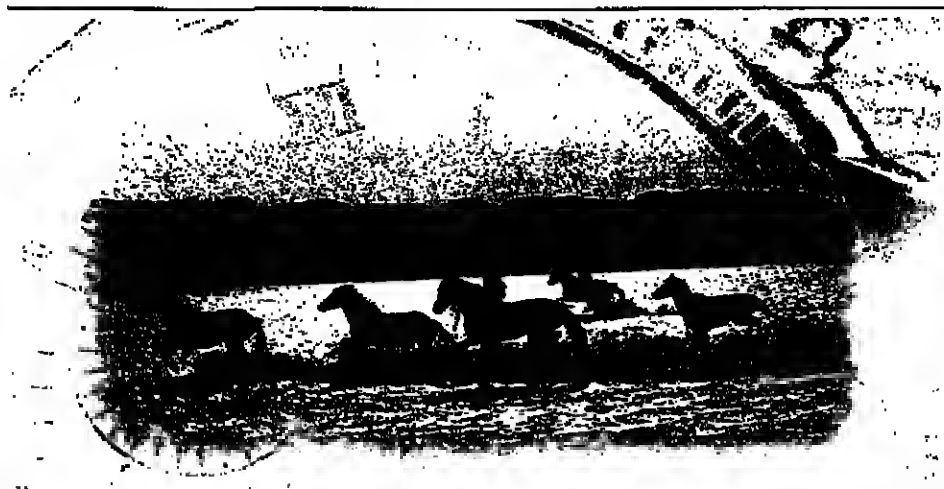
Under the financial restructuring Eurotunnel is proposing to give the banks a stake of between 45 and 61 per cent in the tunnel in exchange for their writing off or converting £4.7bn of the £5.7bn they are owed.

Mr Summers doubts whether the incident will be enough to stop bankers from voting the deal through in the new year. But he is concerned about what would happen if Eurotunnel were forced to redesign its fleet of freight shuttles. "If that happened it would reduce the number of lorries it could carry and greatly increase the loading times. At one extreme that could be very damaging."

Business Comment, page 25



Train in vain: A traveller stares at the notice boards at London's Waterloo Station after all Eurostar services were cancelled. Photograph: Peter Macdiarmid



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Dangerous to fly over Africa, pilots are told

Ian Burrell

Airline pilots warned yesterday of an impending air disaster because of a "critical deficiency" in safety standards in most of African air space.

Representatives for the world's air traffic controllers said last night they had called a meeting with the pilots and that airlines could soon be warned that it was no longer safe to fly over large areas of the continent.

A bulletin issued by the International Federation of Air Line Pilots' Associations (IFALPA), which represents 100,000 pilots, warns that African air traffic information is often "inaccurate" and "unreliable". Pilots often have no contact with the ground and have to prevent mid-air collisions by issuing radio broadcasts to other pilots notifying them of their position and speed.

It claims that runways are covered in rubber tyre marks, rendering brake action ineffective. Airports are surrounded with high concentrations of birds, and non-existent security allows people, animals and vehicles on to runways.

The bulletin said there had been 57 safety scares, including air-misses, over Africa since August last year and that "giving the flying public and pilots the impression that they are flying through an area in which their flight is continuously regulated and safeguarded could not be further from the truth".

It added: "The lack of air traffic control coupled with a demand for more traffic in the region increases the risk on a daily basis, of a tragic accident or incident occurring."

The overthrow of apartheid in South Africa has led to a 300 per cent increase in air traffic from Europe. At the same time, other African countries have lifted bans which had prevented South African Airways flying in their air space.

Tony van Heerden, president of the Airline Pilots Association of South Africa, said Angola effectively had no air traffic control at all. "All it is is a billing service. They want to know your time of departure, aircraft registration number and destination and say 'we will send you the bill', he said.

Airlines must pay US\$1,000 (£600) for each flight over Angolan airspace. Angolan air traffic controllers have no telephone contact with their counterparts in neighbouring Botswana, and a similar lack of communication exists between neighbours Congo and Zaire.

Mr Van Heerden said there were also tremendous congestion problems over Chad and Algeria, where there is no radar, and pilots are told to make their own collision avoidance arrangements with other pilots. In Francophone Africa, pilots and air traffic controllers speak in French, in breach of international safety regulations, which require that they communicate in English.

IFALPA said it would be meeting pilots' representatives in London in January, when a joint warning could be issued to airlines saying that it was no longer safe to fly over Africa.

Proben Lauridsen, president of IFALFA, said: "Some of these criticisms are very valid indeed. The main problem is that all the money airlines are paying in route charges is not going to air traffic control but on road construction, industry or even arms deals."

Mr Lauridsen said the situation was so serious that airlines might have to soon re-route around the continent. "Unless something is done, we will all have to say to the airlines 'you must not fly through this area because safety is not what it should be', he said.

The warning does not apply to South Africa, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Namibia, Egypt, Western Sahara or Morocco.

significant shorts

More bombings feared after rebuff to IRA

A four-point peace plan has been carried to John Major by John Hume, the SDLP leader, from Gerry Adams, the Sinn Féin leader.

But last night ministerial sources at Westminster said the conditions for a resumption of the IRA ceasefire were unacceptable, and it could herald a renewed bombing campaign in Britain.

"We would not have a country or a party behind us if we accepted their terms. It's completely out of the question," said one minister.

The attempts to bring about a breakthrough in the peace talks will be on the agenda today at a meeting between Irish and British ministers in Belfast.

Colin Brown

£1m legal bill for ex-prime minister

The former Irish prime minister Albert Reynolds faced a £1m legal costs bill, despite winning a libel action against the *Sunday Times*. A Dublin jury found in his favour but awarded him zero damages, and he had already refused a payment into court by paper.

'Wall of silence' over man who died in custody

A witness to the arrest of a man who died in police custody was chased away by a baton-wielding officer, an inquiry heard yesterday. "Patrick" took a lot of convincing that it would be safe for him to describe what happened, the hearing into Wayne Douglas's death was told.

The jury at Southwark Crown Court, London, heard that police met a "wall of silence" in their hunt for witnesses to Douglas's arrest last December. His death sparked rioting throughout Britain.

The 25-year-old former postman, detained after a chase following a knife-point burglary, was said to have been hit on the wrist with a baton to make him drop a kitchen knife. PC James Page said Douglas repeatedly lunged at him and a colleague with the eight-inch blade. "I was terrified," he said. *Jojo Moyes*

Newsman 'sacked'

The deputy editor of the *Express*, Ian Monk, was asked to resign last night following the arrest of his wife for allegedly trying to sell stolen copies of the Allan Starkie biography *Fergie: Her Secret Life*.

Marianne Macdonald

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I thought I'd never get out alive'

Lorry drivers, clutching napkins to their faces, lay on the floor

Christian Wolmar, Mary Dejevsky and James Cusick

The 8.45 freight shuttle from Calais on Monday night was full because earlier industrial action at the French end had caused delays. The strikers, angry at Eurotunnel's plans to cut jobs staged a two-hour sit-in, and resumed work only 45 minutes before the fire.

Eurotunnel was unable to explain exactly why there were 29 lorries, rather than the normal 28 on the train. A spokesperson said: "It may be that one of the wagons had two smaller vehicles on it." The 31 drivers and passengers - who included a seven-month pregnant girlfriend of one of the truckers - were all sitting in the Club Car behind the front locomotive. There were also two crew, the *chef de train* and the stewardess who serves the meals to the truck drivers. Behind them were 28 freight wagons, four loaders, and the second locomotive at the rear, a train of 700m in all.

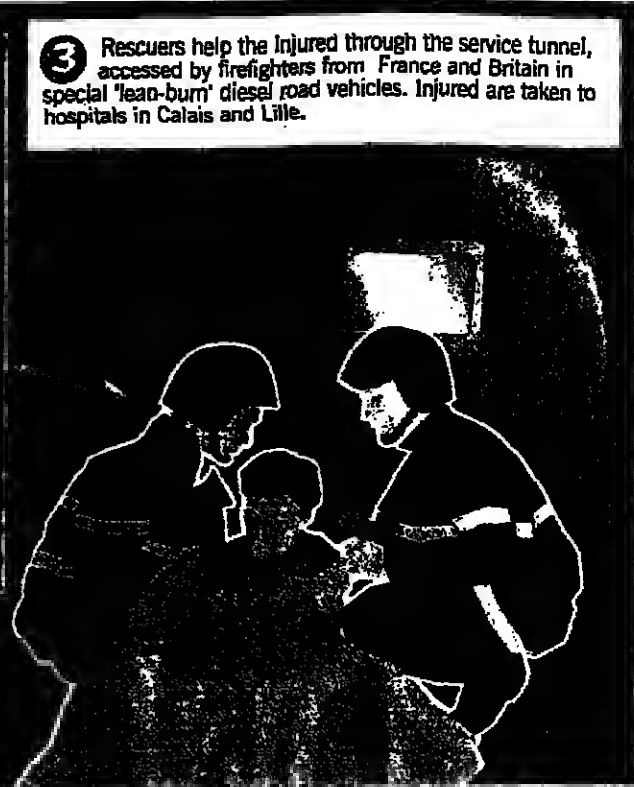
Denis, a young French lorry driver who lives in Scotland, said that he noticed something amiss early in the journey. "About 200 or 300m into the tunnel, the Shuttle braked and almost stopped, then set off again." As a regular user of the tunnel, he said he found this unusual. But the first thing Emile Gerard, the *chef de train*, noticed wrong when he was alerted simultaneously by a visual and sound alarm, set off by sensors, and by a call from the British controller. Mr Gerard immediately followed the emergency procedures,



1 Fire begins just after 9pm Monday in a lorry in a northbound freight third of the way and Folkestone British tunnel. The fire, in the 24th 28-carriage train, black, toxic fumes from the polystyrene cargo on the lorry.



2 31 passengers, all in the front club coach, escape the poisonous fumes in the tunnel going through a cross-passage service tunnel between the north and southbound tunnels. With the three crew of the damaged train, they board a tourist shuttle stopped going southbound to Calais.



3 Rescuers help the injured through the service tunnel, accessed by firefighters from France and Britain in special 'lean-burn' diesel road vehicles. Injured are taken to hospitals in Calais and Lille.

Fire-fighting the news: the story of the story

Michael Streeter

As fire brigades from both sides of the Channel fought the tunnel blaze, the question was posed last night: did Eurotunnel news managers indulge in their own brand of fire-fighting?

There was concern that the company, which had privately dreaded such the damage a fire would have on the tunnel's image, might have tried to play down the impact of the fire - only to

be forced to reveal the full extent as more details began to emerge.

One BBC journalist said yesterday: "While there was no feeling of a deliberate attempt to manage the news, there was a sense of some complacency on their part."

"And I think the spin doctors were spinning in the initial period between 11pm and 3am."

Certainly the first comments from Eurotunnel press officers just after midnight yesterday to the British media were

stressing the minimal casualties and expressed a lack of information about the problems.

At 00.08 a spokesman said: "We do not know exactly what damage has been caused because the firefighters are still dealing with it."

Shortly afterwards a spokesman was already putting the on-going incident into historical context.

"This is the first fire in the tunnel since it opened in 1994," he said.

As the morning media covered the dra-

ma, the company was still emphasising the success of the safety procedures and praising rescue crews.

Alain Bertrand, director of Eurotunnel Operations at Calais, told BBC TV Breakfast News: "They have done a very very good job indeed."

Eurotunnel press officer Allison Andrews denied any complacency and said the company has simply given the information as it came in and was confirmed. "I think we played it straight," she said.

cuers arrived. "It was very fraught," she said, "but the train manager managed to calm people down and stopped one person smashing a window."

French firefighters arrived along the service tunnel around 20 minutes after the train stopped and their British counterparts arrived about an hour later, having apparently only been alerted at 10pm.

The fire, thought to have started in a lorry carrying a load of polystyrene, was still smouldering seven hours later, having caused extensive damage to the tunnel including buckled rails. The fire was not brought under control until 6am.

Mr Gerard and Ms Matczak were taken by helicopter to Lille. Six people, including a female crew member, were taken to hospital in Calais; 26 others taken to a Boulogne hospital and all but five were discharged yesterday morning.

Chunnel survivors tell of terror in fum-filled carriage

Jojo Moyes

Lorry drivers told yesterday of their fear when they were trapped choking in a "tomb-like" fume-filled compartment while waiting to be rescued from the Channel tunnel fire.

They said they feared for their lives during the blaze that left 19 Britons needing hospital treatment for the effects of fumes and shock. In all, 34 people had to be brought to safety.

Jeff Waghorn, 32, from Westcliff-on-Sea, Essex, said he and other drivers lay on the floor of the passenger compartment section of the train fearing they would not get out alive.

In a bid to avoid inhaling fumes, they held damp napkins to their noses for about 10-15 minutes.

"We were getting light-headed. Another five minutes, I think there

would have been a proper disaster," he said. "It felt like a lifetime when you're lying there looking at your life and wondering whether you're going to get out alive."

Another driver, Ian Edwards, 53, from Burton on Trent, Staffordshire, said: "Things got pretty desperate. Everybody was lying on the floor, moaning. One pregnant lady was getting pretty hysterical."

Fellow-driver Brian Shilton, 46, said: "It was like being in a tomb. We were really frightened. That was the closest I've ever come to death. I thought my time was up."

The man who had prevented total panic among the 31 passengers and three crew was *chef de train* Emile Gerard, 43. He made those on board soak paper serviettes and hold them over their faces as toxic



Victims Sonia Matczak and train driver Emile Gerard prior to leaving hospital. Photograph: Reuters

smoke swept into the shuttle train's passenger compartment.

Later, he was able to lead people into the safety of the service tunnel that runs between the two rail tunnels.

Sonia Matczak, 27, who is seven and a half months pregnant, was accompanying her trucker boyfriend on the train. She had been concerned

for the health of her unborn child, already named Julian, and was yesterday recovering in Lille after checking for smoke inhalation. "I was panicking a bit, but Emile was the hero. He saved us all," she said.

Six people were immediately taken to France through the service tunnel, while the others were got out via a shuttle train that came through the

unaffected French-bound tunnel. Eight of the worst-affected drivers and crew members were treated in the service tunnel before being taken to hospital.

All 19 people who needed treatment in France for the effects of fumes and shock were expected to be released from hospital late last night.

Chunnel hoppers a stoic breed

Jojo Moyes

The fire caused serious disruption for travellers to and from the continent, with huge queues in the Eurostar terminal at Waterloo. Yet most passengers said the safety scare would not prevent them from using the service again.

All car shuttles through the tunnel were cancelled, and initial plans to transport passengers to ferry terminals on the coast were disrupted when bad weather meant that some ferry services did not run.

Dover was heavily congested as traffic was switched from the tunnel to the port and Eurotunnel chartered two planes to take passengers from Gatwick to Paris.

Anne Andrews, a French woman married to a Briton, had been booked to travel to Paris for an overnight stay, to return today.

"I've had to cancel the whole thing. I just tried to telephone my husband

but I can't even hear him because of the [platform cleaning] machinery. I've got two people expecting me in Paris. I don't even have any English money. I really don't know what to do," she said.

Also stranded was Chiharu Machida, a Japanese tourist, one of a group of four who had planned to travel over to Paris yesterday.

"We just got here and found out. We don't know what to do. If we were European we could transfer another way but we don't know how to make a transfer. We think we are best to wait here."

The mood among most waiting passengers was one of resignation.

Retired railwayman Geoffrey Unthank, from York, who was making a Eurostar journey for the first time, was unfazed.

"It's very unfortunate, but these things happen. It certainly hasn't put me off travelling on Eurostar," he said.

NATIONAL SAVINGS

Investment Ideas

I WANT TO BUY MY YOUNG DAUGHTER a special Christmas present which will start her off well when she leaves school. Any ideas?

Mrs A Harris
CAMBRIDGE

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NATIONAL SAVINGS
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"The Government has misrepresented the cost of the Firearms Bill. They have undervalued the property they are to confiscate, failed to mention the cost of putting 2,000 people out of work and ignored the cost of the litigation which will inevitably follow their ineffective and unjust proposals."

Albie Fox, Chairman, the Sportsman's Association

The Sportsman's Association

of Great Britain & Northern Ireland

"The bill is an illogical, media-led response to a complex problem. It will not work and may create a situation which is more dangerous than the one which exists at present. In attempting to ban a single category of object - centre-fire handguns - it fails to address the key issue: spree killing and how to prevent it."

Mike Yardley, National Spokesman, the Sportsman's Association

The Firearms (Amendment) Bill

This bill is now being considered by your MP's. It is most unlikely to affect conventional armed crime or prevent another Dunblane tragedy, but, it will:

Cost you, the Taxpayer, at least £300 Million*

* Some estimates put the cost of the legislation at over £1 Billion

Give the public a false sense of security

Distract attention from the policing failure at Dunblane*

Misdirect Police resources on a massive scale

Put 2000 people out of work

Drive handguns underground - fuelling the black market*

Ignore the advice of Lord Cullen's Inquiry

* Most experts believe that there are far more illegally owned handguns than legal ones

Why the Government's bill will not work

The Firearms (Amendment) Bill is unlikely to prevent another Dunblane type tragedy because it attempts to ban a single category of object - centrefire handguns. Such a ban is futile because a crazed individual might defeat the licensing system, or, much more likely, such a person might acquire a firearm by illegal means.

In his evidence to the Parliamentary Home Affairs Committee on the Possession of Handguns, Sir James Sharples, President of the Association of Chief Police Officers, said that bans would not work and that the police service had learnt that it needed to pay more attention to the personal suitability of the individual. Although ACPO's position has subsequently changed, we think the truth in Sir James' comments is clear.

So what should be done?

The Sportsman's Association want better laws and improved vetting procedures for those who apply for or attempt to renew shotgun or firearm certificates. Thomas Hamilton was investigated 7 times without action being taken against him. We must ensure that this never happens again. There may be a need for a specialist firearms licensing authority as recommended by both the Home Office and Firearms Consultative Committee.

A centralised licensing authority would take the administrative responsibility for issuing firearm and shotgun certificates away from the police and put it in the hands of specialists. The weakness of existing arrangements is that police officers may be sent out on firearms enquiries without adequate training or knowledge.

What will the bill do?

The public should also be concerned about the consequences of the proposed legislation on sporting men and women and on the economy. In its present form this legislation will destroy at least 2,000 jobs. It will dislocate the lives of tens of thousands of decent, law-abiding sportsmen and women too and cost the taxpayer a great deal of money.

Some may say, that inconvenience to the shooting community, or slightly increased taxes for all are nothing as compared to the suffering of the parents and people of Dunblane. That is true. But, in a mature democracy there is only one good reason for legislation of the type proposed - a true public benefit. The firearms bill as proposed is illogical. It scapegoats the innocent, sets a dangerous precedent for confiscation of private property and may aggravate the problem of armed crime. It is the product of media-led politics.

THE TRUE COST OF THE FIREARMS BILL

The Government has revised its estimate for implementing the firearms bill from £25-50 million to £100 million. But, the published costings are still wildly wrong, not least, because they fail to mention the cost of putting 2,000 people on the dole. They only consider costs for the compensation of property loss at figures far below true market value.

The Sportsman's Association has engaged specialist accountants to estimate the real costs of the bill. They have concluded that the likely cost of the legislation will be £450 million (nearly 1/2 p in the £1 on income tax) with a minimum cost of £300 million. These figures are made up of:

- £56,000,000 (140,000 firearms to be confiscated from approx. 45,000 individuals at an average cost of £400)
- £18,000,000 (ancillary equipment which will become worthless when bill becomes law)
- £30,000,000 (loss of dealer's stock)
- £150,000,000 (costs to the treasury in dole and retraining of 2,000 specialist employees)
- £200,000,000 (loss of 1000 dealer's earnings @ average of £20,000 per annum for ten years)
- £2,400,000 (the bill for the 40 extra Government staff who will administer bill)
- **£456,400,000 TOTAL COST** (which is the equivalent of 100 new schools or 2 new hospitals)

Even these calculations exclude the increased policing costs and the price of litigation against this mistaken legislation.

How the Sportsman's Association began

The Sportsman's Association was formed at Eley (the National Shooting Centre) on the 19th October, 1996. Six hundred ordinary people gathered because they were alarmed by Government proposals. In just over three weeks, 40,000 more have joined their ranks. We are still growing by several thousand members a day.

Who has joined the Sportsman's Association?

Our membership includes thousands of ordinary men and women from all walks of life, many of whom are parents. We were all appalled by Dunblane but we believe that the Government's proposed firearms legislation is wrong. It ignores Lord Cullen's advice, will destroy a great sport and creates an ominous precedent for introducing drastic, irrational legislation as a response to calamity. If, despite our best efforts, the Firearms Bill becomes law, we will challenge its legality in home and European courts.

The Sportsman's Association, No 1, Sentinel Works, Whitchurch Road, Shrewsbury, Salop. SY1 4DP
Telephone / fax: 01743 - 461 689

The Sportsman's Association

of Great Britain & Northern Ireland

No 1, Sentinel Works, Whitchurch Road, Shrewsbury, Salop. SY1 4DP
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or 01743 - 874 905

JOIN US NOW!

If you are concerned about the Firearms Bill and other attacks on traditional sports, we need your help. As well as joining the Sportsman's Association we ask you to

WRITE AT ONCE TO YOUR MP
The address is: House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA.

Membership Application Form

I apply for membership of the Sportsman's Association of Great Britain and agree to abide by its Constitution & Rules. I wish to register my protest against the proposed legislation to restrict participation in shooting sports. I agree that the Association may keep my details on computer and that the Association may rely on the exemption from registering under the Data Protection Act.

I enclose my Membership Fee (minimum £5.00 Adults or £1.00 for junior members under 18) made payable to SAGB.

TITLE: _____ SURNAME: _____

FORENAMES: _____ DATE OF BIRTH: _____

ADDRESS: _____

POSTCODE: _____ TELEPHONE: _____ FAX NO: _____

OCCUPATION: _____

PLEASE CIRCLE: £5 £10 £25 £50 OTHER

DATE: _____ SIGNATURE: _____

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الجمعية الرياضية

1550 من المصن



Waiting hopefully: A bus queue at Portway Hill, near Dudley, yesterday. In parts of the Midlands there were drifts up to eight feet deep

Winter's first blast brings white-outs and darkness

Michael Streeter

Heavy snow, torrential rain and gale-force winds blocked roads, closed schools and claimed at least two lives yesterday as the first blast of winter struck Britain. The snow came as far south as London and Kent. In Wales, electricity supplies to many homes were cut by strong winds.

Further rain and sleet were forecast for the south today, with heavy frosts and clearer conditions moving in from the north-west.

The Automobile Association said it was unusual for the South to have such conditions in November but a spokesman for the London Weather Centre thought otherwise. "It's not that unusual to have snow in November," he said. "The last time London had snow this late was in 1983."

The worst of the snow, including drifts of up to eight feet, was across the Midlands and the North and in the west. All roads in the Pennines apart from the M62 were closed for a time.

In Staffordshire a lorry driver died in a three-vehicle pile-up on the snow-covered M6. Drivers of two other lorries were seriously injured and some 200 sheep spilled on to the carriageway from one of the trucks. Some were killed by following vehicles.

The driver of a stolen car was killed in Shropshire when he crashed while police chased him at up to 70mph in falling snow. Rural schools in north Wales closed and in south Wales more than 8,000 homes were blacked out.

In Derbyshire which saw up to six inches of snow, a police spokesman said: "We have had dozens upon dozens of accidents. Lorries are off the road all over the place." Snow affected parts of Scotland, with the A90 between Dundee and Perth described by the AA as treacherous.

Photograph: News Team

Patient care being severely affected, survey shows

Hospitals warn of worst funds crisis for years

Liz Hunt
Health Editor

The National Health Service is facing its worst cash crisis since the introduction of the Government's reforms, according to a survey of finance directors and senior executives in trust hospitals and health authorities across the country.

The survey confirms the recent warnings of doctors and managers of an "emergency only" service this winter, which forced Stephen Dorrell, the Secretary of State for Health, to seek extra funding for the NHS

from the Treasury. However, the sum won by Mr Dorrell - estimates range from £500m to more than £1bn extra in total - applies to the next financial year and will do nothing to avert problems this winter. The Department of Health has ruled out any interim payments to see hospitals through this period.

But the new survey of more than 130 trust hospitals and one-third of all health authorities, suggests that patient care is being severely affected by the present funding crisis.

The trusts are being forced to increase waiting lists, lengthen

out-patient waiting times, close beds, and reduce staffing levels in order to maintain some degree of financial viability, the survey found. More than one-quarter said that they were "worse off" than expected by up to £1m, and about one in twenty cited a figure of more than £1m.

"Even those trusts who are keeping within forecasts have had to take tough decisions and strong measures to keep within their budgets," according to the survey by the Healthcare Financial Management Association which represents all NHS finance directors, and the National Association of Health Authorities and Trusts.

Action being taken by health authorities - who purchase care from trusts for the population under their care - includes increasing waiting lists, deferring extra-contractual referrals to specialist hospitals or centres of expertise, and renegotiation of their contracts with trusts to reduce prices.

Almost one-third of the health authorities which responded to the survey said that they were worse off than expected by up to £1m, more than one in ten said that the figure was more than £1m, and about one in eight said that it was more than £2m.

One specific finding was that 27 per cent of trusts were anticipating an increased income from extra-contractual referrals of patients, while 35 per cent of health authorities were planning to defer such referrals. "These expectations are inconsistent and one of other position is bound to worsen," the survey concludes.

Keith Ford, chairman of the HFMA which is part of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy, said yesterday: "There are clearly a number of trusts and health authorities under pressure. HFMA is not interested in running scare stories but neither is it prepared to minimise difficulties."

The near unanimous view of health-service personnel, from doctors to chief executives, that the NHS faces possibly the worst crisis in its history this year, has meant that their claims are being taken seriously and not dismissed as the usual pre-budget "shroud waving".

The Government's own figures also lend support to this view. Earlier this month it was revealed that 36 trust hospitals were already in the red by £34m, just six months into the financial year and despite a statutory responsibility to break even. In addition, 65 of the 99 district health authorities expected deficits in the 1996-97 financial year.

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**Judith Judd
and Fran Abrams**

"Either the selection process is ineffective and therefore suspect or they are failing to teach children properly. One of the



Photograph: Brian Harris

Roger Hale, head of Caistor Grammar School in Lincolnshire, said the intake of grammar schools varied in different parts of the country. In some cities, the percentage selected was as low as seven while in other places it might be 34.

"As a headteacher I would

The publication of the tables caused controversy. Gillian Shephard, Secretary of State for

Education, said: "Over five years tables have consistently driven up standards. This information provides an impetus for excellent schools and college to do even better, spurs those below average to set targets for improvement and galvanises poor performers into action."

However, David Hart, general secretary of the National Association of Head Teachers

said: "Any attempt to argue that the improvement has been largely the result of league tables would be insulting to the professionalism of school staff."

Critics say the tables do not present a fair picture of schools' performance because they do not take into account intakes. Labour has said that it will publish year-on-year comparisons to show how schools are improv-

Ministers are also investigating "value-added" tables. ■ Research by Exeter University's geography department found that gender, school size and type and pupils' socio-economic backgrounds accounted for nearly 80 per cent of the variation in GCSE performance.

Gulf between best and worst still growing

Fran Abrams
Education Correspondent

The gulf between Britain's least and most successful pupils is continuing to grow, official school league tables published today reveal. While the proportion of pupils gaining five high grades at GCSE rose by 1 per cent this year, the proportion leaving school with nothing fell by just 0.2 per cent.

Last night a head teachers' leader claimed that the tables could actually be forcing some pupils into failure. David Hart, general secretary of the National Association of Head Teachers, said the "long tail of

Nationally, 44.5 per cent of pupils now leave school with at least five GCSEs at grades A*-C while 7.9 per cent leave without even one grade C. One

The school with the highest average A-level points score was an independent school in Birmingham. At King Edward VI

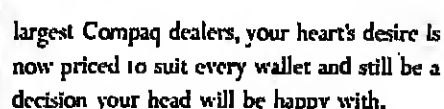
School for Girls, the average pupil gained three As and a C. The highest A-Level score at a comprehensive was at Fulford School in York, with an A and two Bs. The top GCSE score at a comprehensive was at the Blue Coat School in Liverpool, where 97 per cent of pupils gained five or more A*-C grades.

than 5 per cent of pupils gained five or more A*-C grades. On the truancy scale, the worst performers had almost a quarter of their pupils missing on any given half day. The most improved school was Banovallum School, a secondary modern in Homcastle, Lincolnshire, where the percentage of pupils gaining five high-grade GCSEs went up from 11 per cent in 1995 to 38 per cent in 1996.

TOP 100 COMPENSATIONS	
The top 100 school boards (selected list of more than 100 boards) ranked schools, including school systems	
Westborough School, East Sussex	100
Rockville School, Denver	99
High Technology School, East	98
Seaside High School, Newport	97
High School, East Sussex	96
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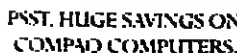
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news

THE WEAPONS DEBATE

New power for police to curb 'Rambo' knives

Jason Bennett
Crime Correspondent

New police powers to stop and search suspects, and legislation to restrict the promotion of "Rambo style" combat knives, was proposed by the Government yesterday.

The two initiatives are the latest attempts by Michael Howard, the Home Secretary, to tackle the growing concerns about the escalating knife culture. But the proposal to give police greater freedom to search people was immediately condemned by civil liberty groups as a draconian measure that could lead to unrest and discrimination in inner cities.

The Home Office is proposing to amend the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 to allow police to stop and search in a specified area for "a suitable period" if a senior officer reasonably believes that people may be carrying weapons or drugs. A similar measure could be introduced in Scotland.

However after opposition from Labour it is understood that the Home Office has

agreed to drop the drugs aspect of the proposal and restrict it to knives.

This proposal follows an announcement earlier this month by Mr Howard that the police code of practice would be altered to allow officers to stop and search anyone they believed to be a member of a gang known to carry knives or other weapons.

John Wadham, director of Liberty, the civil rights organisation, said: "This latest proposal is a massive extension of stop and search powers. Any young person, any black person, any person with long hair, in fact any person at all will be subject to random and arbitrary searches by the police."

But Mr Howard said: "Extra stop and search powers for the police will tackle the real evil of people carrying knives in public without good reason."

In a letter to Labour's shadow home secretary Jack Straw, and the Liberal Democrats' spokesman Alex Carlisle, Mr Howard also proposed a new offence of marketing a knife in a way which suggests an aggressive use for it. This would

apply both to its name and advertising. However Mr Howard admitted this would not prevent the sale of any knives, just their packaging.

He said: "This would not guarantee the prohibition of the sale of undesirable knives. But it would stop them being called by unacceptable names or being accompanied by unacceptable language." The new marketing offence - aimed at weapons with names like The Vindicator - would carry a maximum penalty of six months imprisonment and/or a £5,000 fine.

The new measures could be taken through the Commons by Labour MP Jimmy Wray. Mr Wray came top in a ballot for backbenchers to have an opportunity to pilot legislation on to the statute book. He is in discussion with Labour about the precise wording of the Bill, which will be published in early December.

Jack Straw said the Home Office proposals, which will be considered by Labour when they receive full details, was belated recognition by ministers that the law surrounding knives could be tightened.



Not forgotten: Yesterday at Dunblane cemetery where the teacher Gwen Major and some of the pupils who died with her in the school massacre are buried. Photograph: Colin McPherson

'16 tiny bodies in cold graves who should not be there'

Anthony Davies
Political Editor

The high emotion of the Dunblane crusade against handguns continued yesterday, in the wake of the clear-cut Commons defeat for a total ban.

Aun Pearson, of the Snowdrop Campaign, told the BBC radio Today programme: "All I know is that in the very cold cemetery in Dunblane there are 16 tiny children and a beloved teacher who shouldn't be there; cold under the ground."

"They should be warm and they should be with their families, and although money in the pocket is important, and basic health care and educating your children is important, what is more important is not having the life of a loved one taken from you, or a child of yours disabled for the rest of their life."

Given the absence of 22 Labour, and seven Liberal Democrat, MPs from the vote, and a Government majority of 25 against a total ban on handguns, Opposition sources were yesterday keen to emphasise that Labour could not have won the vote - because the Ulster Unionists would have saved the day for John Major.

The Government's overall majority at present stands at one vote over all other parties, but there were four Ulster Unionists and three Democratic Unionists voting with the Government - more than offsetting the votes of the four Conservative who voted with Labour and the other minority parties.

In theory, the votes of the missing Labour and Liberal Democrat MPs could have been enough to defeat the Government.

In fact, most of those missing MPs were "paired" off with 18 non-voting Conservative MPs. If they had not needed such an arrangement, their votes would have been needed by Conservative MPs who would have been paired up to vote.

Among the Labour MPs who were paired in that way were some who have been in the time, and some, including Labour women, who are on official visits abroad.

Labour whips said that some of those who were paired, including Frank Cook, Stockton North, and David Young, Bolton South East, would have abstained even if they had not been paired.

Tragedy shows it is time to do something for Scotland

The world stops rarely. Things go out of focus, time ceases to march, trivia becomes of consuming importance. Questions you had never given a second thought become the only ones worth asking. You forget yourself.

But people are weeping in the street. Parents are scurrying for home, or huddling at school gates. No one says anything worth hearing. This happens everywhere, simultaneously, while television becomes hyp-

notic and the people paid to put things into words discover precisely how useless words are. That was Dunblane.

A small nation is its own world, parochial, introverted, engulfed by intimacy. This is both comforting and claustrophobic, but it is a fact you forget until something profound enters the nervous system of your society. And here's another fact: Dunblane happened in Scotland, but it also happened to Scotland.

According to the parliamen-

Why not a ban on all handguns in Scotland, argues Ian Bell

tary friends of the gun lobby, begging the only question, emotion makes for bad law. It is their duty to be above such things when they defend the rights of decent, ordinary shooters against hysterical grief. (Quite a phrase, "hysterical grief": there's another kind?) So we elect to Parliament people capable of debating, with exquisite discrimination, the relative potencies of various killing ma-

chines who yet refuse to allow the human currency of simple misery into their deliberations. But they won that point, the shooters, if no other. Parliament and media bought the line that any law made in response to the Dunblane murders had to be dispassionate, infinitely reasonable, and above all immune to anything people actually felt. This, somehow, is how good law is made. Emotion is illegitimate;

what people feel is not a fit subject for legislation.

So Michael Howard produced his scales. The tonnage of hard evidence was weighed against the tonnage of lobbying. In the end an ounce of real feeling - the "emotional blackmail" of the parents and the Snowdrop campaign - tipped the balance a little. But just to ensure that Tory MPs did not let feelings get the better of them, the whips

noted on behalf of all. The beating of children is a matter of conscience; the response to their murder, somehow, is not.

It is difficult to convey precisely how inadequate all of this, particularly for Scots. The very tone of the parliamentary arguments seemed out of scale and tawdry; the nature of the people making the decision ugly and obvious.

It is tempting to believe that

Tories, for their part, have no more mistakes to make in Scotland. That, in itself, might be a mistake. The anger over this miserable compromise runs deep. It is more potent than any row over toy parliaments and tax-raising powers. We will ban some guns, they allow. We will care a bit, feel a little. But not when a hobby is at stake, too much. Now vote for us, please.

The Scottish National Party proposes, meanwhile, that handguns should at least be banned

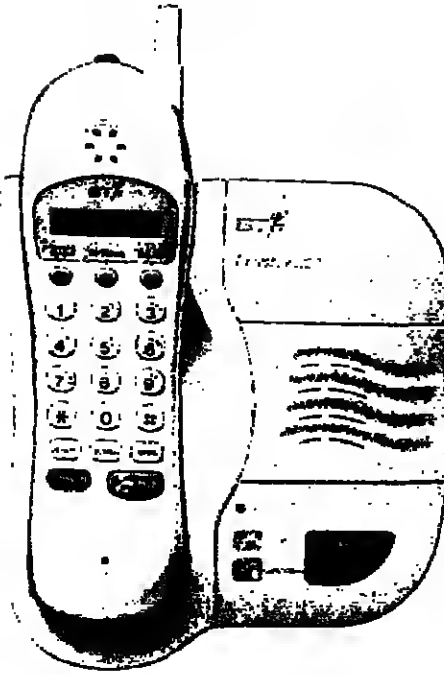
in Scotland. In the Westminster way of things, this is held to be impossible, if not ridiculous. But how so? Pub licensing laws differ, why not gun laws? It is the wish of the majority of Scottish MPs. It is the wish, come to that, of the vast majority of Scots. Something terrible was done to Scotland at Dunblane. This story will not be over, you suspect, until something adequate is done for Scotland.

Ian Bell is a columnist for 'The Scotsman'.

Give something that's bound to get a good reception.

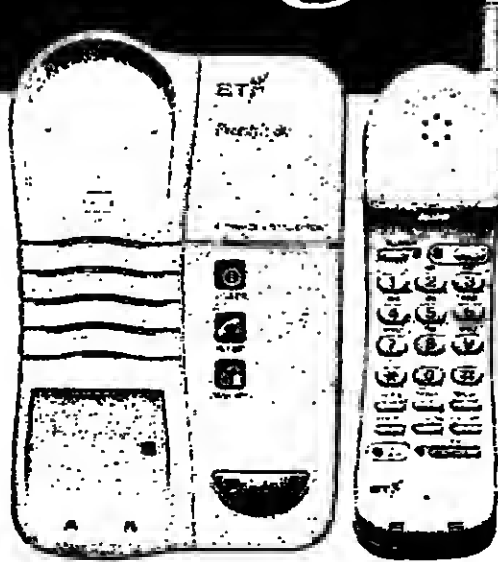
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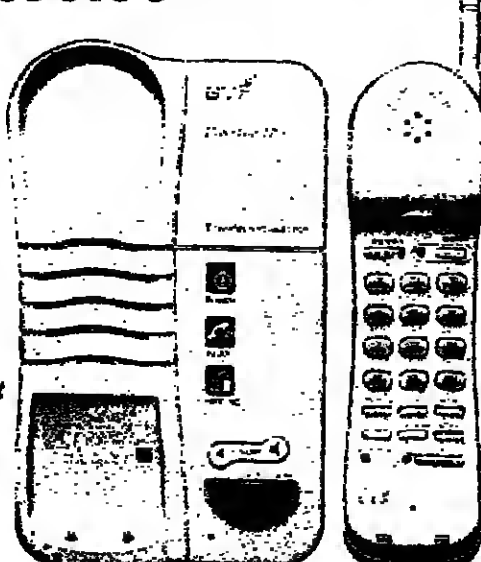
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مكتبة الامم

news

Rugby players' food may have been spiked

Steve Beggan
Chief Reporter

Fresh claims that the New Zealand rugby team was poisoned before its defeat in the World Cup final against South Africa last year have surfaced following investigations by the team doctor and a private detective.

Mike Bowen, the doctor who cared for most of the team when they suffered food poisoning on the day before the final, has told a shocked New Zealand public that he has identified an African herb which he believes was used deliberately to spike tea and coffee.

Rumours of the poisoning have been circulating since New Zealand lost 15-12 in front of a triumphant President Nelson Mandela, but team members have been reluctant to discuss them because they felt they would be accused of sour grapes.

However, in claims coinciding with the launch of his autobiography, Laurie Mains, the team coach, says an internal South African inquiry and a private detective he hired himself found that the team's drinks were spiked with a herb known locally as "Indian trick". The herb is odourless and tasteless but is reputed to induce symptoms similar to severe food poisoning.

"I've always thought it was likely [that the team was poisoned]," Dr Bowe said. "But I never had any evidence that anything was spiked." He said he had since heard that Indian

trick would have produced the symptoms suffered by the team.

Mains said his private investigator had established that a South African waitress known only as "Susie" had been paid to slip Indian trick into the team's tea and coffee on the eve of the final. He did not say, however, how he could be sure or who had paid the waitress.

"I just knew this was no case of ordinary old food poisoning," he said. "We were very, very sick, all but about four or five members of the whole touring party."

The sporting world remains sceptical about the claims, particularly since they coincide with the launch of Mains' autobiography. A fresh controversy is usually regarded as vital to the sales of sports books.

Some believe the fact that no official inquiry has ever been conducted by the New Zealand rugby authorities speaks volumes about how they view the claims. The new allegations were certainly not being taken seriously by the South Africans.

"It is ridiculous that they should be saying this," Boston Banda, first secretary of the South African Embassy's political section in London, said.

"They stayed at a hotel, so their food and drinks were supplied at a neutral location. We denied the claims when they first began circulating. I have never heard of anything called Indian trick and, as far as we are concerned, we won the game fair and square."

Try scorer and scrum half join winger and kicker for eternal game of rugby in the sky



Stadium sentinels: Two new bronze statues by the sculptor Gerald Laing were yesterday put in place above the Rowland Hill Gate entrance at Twickenham in south-west London to complete the quartet commissioned by the Rugby Football Union. The first two players took up their positions last March. Photograph: Tom Pilsten



"I saw an accident when a friend fell from the truck taking us to the plantation. The tyre ran over his leg and he was sent to the company dispensary. They amputated his leg. He got no compensation and had to buy a plastic leg with his own money. The man has not worked since the accident." PINEAPPLE PLANTATION WORKER, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Amputation without compensation in the pineapple industry of the Dominican Republic.

Dismissal for not working overtime in the grape industry of Brazil.

The fruit in your supermarket trolley may look wholesome and appetising, but there's often something rotten inside.

The misery beneath the clingfilm

It doesn't stop at fruit. There are heart-rending stories of exploitation behind produce like vegetables, nuts, flowers, coffee, even prawns.

The details vary, but the themes are consistent enough: low pay, tin-shack housing, unfair dismissal, child labour.

It makes you angry and it makes you want to do something. Well you can.

Why not a boycott?

A boycott isn't the answer because it

can make things even worse for the growers and pickers by taking away the market. And in any case, you can't always tell just by looking which products involve exploitation and which don't.

The answer is actually more inspiring: it's to encourage your supermarket to ensure fair pay and conditions for the producers of all the goods it sells.

Change the rules

Supermarkets have astonishing financial muscle. Some British chains have incomes bigger than the entire economies of Third World nations. When that kind of money talks, people listen.

Supermarkets are increasingly sensitive to social issues, and they care what their customers think.

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"There are families with four, five or six children who must live off 54 peso (about £2.45) per day."

The words are those of a pineapple plantation worker in the Dominican Republic. In making your supermarket listen to you, you're making them listen to her, and to millions of people like her throughout the Third World.

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Channel Island people profited from Nazis

John Crossland

Details of the German occupation of the Channel Islands were disclosed yesterday, revealing evidence of islanders' misery and the cruelty of the only concentration camp ever operated on British soil.

The last tranche of Channel Island documents, released yesterday at the Public Record Office, throw a harsh light on what the Germans called "the model occupation".

The files are largely transcripts of interrogations of escapees undertaken by MI19, the intelligence organisation charged with building up a picture of enemy resources and morale. They give lists of collaborators and "Jerrybags", island women who slept with German soldiers and frequently bore their children.

They also provide the fullest picture yet of the horrors of the Alderney camps, where slave workers - mostly Russian - were starved and beaten to death in the sealed off island.

Jersey women's behaviour was resented even more than the food shortage. One anonymous informant told his intelligence debrief: "The behaviour of a great number of women has been quite disgraceful. There are many illegitimate children on the island born to German fathers ..."

Many of the mothers are married to serving British soldiers ... The states [island parliament] at present have to pay for the upkeep of these German-sired children but what will happen after the occupation?"

He pointed out that under Jersey law a husband was re-

sponsible for the upkeep of his wife's illegitimate children and there was no redress.

The report says: "Informants report a considerable discontent with the states administration. There will after liberation be a general demand for the incorporation of Jersey into the UK ... they speak of timidity and passive acceptance of the demands of the occupying forces. The island bosses moreover have lived well. Though they may have increased bank balances at the end of the war as evidence against them, they

have never gone short of food, fuel and other commodities that are in short supply for the man in the street."

A 24-year-old farmer, Oscar Horman, and his friend Charles Bordis, a clerk, who escaped to England via France after D Day, singled out two racketeers for special attention: Mr Le Gresley, the food controller, and Major Le Masurier, president of the supreme council.

They were accused of taking the small amount of food left behind in 1940 and not commended by the Germans. "These few loads were taken by lorry to the private houses of island chefs such as Le Gresley and Le Masurier. This was reported to informants by J. Curwood of Rouge Bouillon who was one of the lorry drivers concerned."

The papers also give a sickening catalogue of the treatment suffered by the slave workers used to build Hitler's Atlantic wall. SS guards used their bloodhounds to hunt the prisoners across the "deadline" that they would be shot "while attempting to escape".

Horman and Bordis told the officers of a new party that was formed on the island called the Jersey Democratic Society. "This is not a resistance group it is a movement with post-war aims," the files say. "It leads the campaign for the abolition of Jersey's feudal system and independence by publishing and distributing illegal pamphlets in which instances of graft and double dealing are fully set out with names and evidence."

The escapees described plans for revenge on unfaithful women. "The patriotic youths of the island have their own plans well laid," the papers say. "They are not going to copy the French by cutting off the hair ... They have been collecting stocks of tar for the day of liberation and publicly tar and fatter all Jerrybags they can lay their hands on ..."

The local police are determined to turn a blind eye when the husbands return because murder will be done and public opinion will be in general approval.

The files give examples of war crimes, including the crucifixion of Russian slave workers and the drowning, in full sight of the Alderney coast, of a bailed-out Lancaster bomber crew without any help being given. They confirm that Kurt Klebeck, who until recently was under investigation for his role in running the concentration camp on Alderney, was "in charge of the prisoners" on the island.

The papers also give a sickening catalogue of the treatment suffered by the slave workers used to build Hitler's Atlantic wall. SS guards used their bloodhounds to hunt the prisoners across the "deadline" that they would be shot "while attempting to escape".

Social services shake up follows abuse controversy

Roger Dobson

A major review of Wales's biggest social services department has been launched following allegations - including abuse, claims of child prostitution and mismanagement - that have seen three senior members of staff suspended.

Cardiff County Council has been dogged by controversy since taking over from the former South Glamorgan authority during local government reorganisation last April.

In that time, a former care worker has been jailed for abusing children in his charge, a lorry driver who abducted girls from a home in the city has been jailed, police are investigating alleged abuse at the former Taff

Vale home, a care worker has been disciplined for not following procedures when a 13-year-old girl went missing, and a young man has started legal action after allegedly contracting HIV in care.

There have also been complaints about management practice and the council is accused of trying to gag Karen McKay, a care worker, who spoke out about problems.

Now, the authority has decided to hold what is described as a fundamental review of social services which will be subjected to external scrutiny.

A separate inquiry panel, chaired by a lawyer, will look into the allegations about management practice, but will not investigate abuse claims surrounding the now closed Taff Vale home. Detectives are trying to trace more than 400 former residents and staff there.

The suspension of the three senior officers concerned management practices and was not connected with claims of abuse.

The authority has also devised an 11-point strategy which includes the introduction of a child care action team to look at children at risk from prostitution, drugs and other crimes. A spokesman for Vale

From Care, which looks after the interest of children in care, said: "We welcome the tightening up of rules, but would point out that significant numbers of young people have faced injustices and in some cases the damage is irreparable."

Mass walk-out brings universities to a halt

Barrie Clement
Labour Editor

Around 100,000 employees staged a 24-hour pay strike which almost brought British universities to a standstill yesterday as tough new proposals to curb industrial action were published by the Government.

Yesterday's action involved more workers - from professors to porters - than any other stoppage since the miners' strike. Despite the weather, 100,000 members staged rallies, marches and demonstrations at universities as far apart as Swansea and Aberdeen. The eight unions involved said that few members crossed picket lines.

The protest, at wage offers of 2.5 per cent for manual workers and 1.5 per cent for the rest, is expected to continue with disruptive action stopping short of yesterday's strike.

Under the Green Paper, most of the university employees who walked out would have been involved in unlawful action. The document says that stoppages should only be legitimate if more than half of eligible union members vote for strikes - rather than a majority of those who return voting forms. Only 38 per cent of members of Unison, the public services union, voted in the strike ballot.

It is also doubtful whether a stoppage at Scotland on 9 December, announced yesterday by train drivers' union Aslef, would be lawful under the Green Paper. The union would possibly have to ensure that some services ran where there was no alternative transport.

Introducing the Green Paper yesterday, Ian Lang, President of the Board of Trade, said it was not his responsibility to draw a line between what would infringe the proposed law and what would not. That would be decided by the courts.

In broad terms, any industrial action which risked life, health and safety or posed a threat to national security would be included. Strikes which damaged property or the economy would also be unlawful.

A potential catch-all phrase, however, is that any action which caused "significant disruption of everyday life or activities in the whole or part of the country" would be considered illegal.

Mr Lang said ministers would allow three months for consultation over the Green Paper and acknowledged that any legislation might well depend on a Conservative victory at the general election.

Other proposals in the Green Paper mean that unions would have to give 14 days notice of action rather than the present seven days; that they would have to hold fresh ballots every two or three months during industrial action; or after an unspecified number of short-duration stoppages.

Mr Lang said his proposals were "reasoned, considered" and relevant to the state of public service strikes during the summer. Courts would soon decide where the boundaries lay. "It is the kind of decision they reach regularly in civil areas," he said.

Asked about employers' scepticism towards the plans, he said that companies had expressed doubts about previ-

ous employment legislation, but had subsequently embraced them.

The Engineering Employers' Federation and the Institute of Directors declared that existing laws had already struck the right balance between both sides of industry and companies were not clamouring for more.

The organisations warned that the wording of the Green Paper was confused and vague. The CBI added that its members doubted if the plans were workable. Under the proposals, aggrieved employers - together with other businesses and members of the public affected by industrial action - could seek injunctions and if necessary sue unions for ordering strikes which had a "disproportionate or excessive" impact.

John Monks, general secretary of the TUC, said Mr Lang was "electioneering". "If these proposals were ever implemented, there would be a fundamental shift in power to bad employers and industrial disputes would be harder to resolve," he argued.

Leading article, page 19



Workers in unison: Staff members on strike outside the University of North London, Holloway Road, yesterday

Photograph: David Rose

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Consumers turn tables on loyalty cards

Glenda Cooper

Shopping has been changed for ever by the "astounding" growth in loyalty cards, with 20 million supermarket cards issued in the last 18 months alone.

According to new research more than half of all credit cards issued now include some kind of loyalty programme, which has become the main weapon in the battle for customers.

The Loyalty Report, commissioned by GM Card, a Vauxhall Motors company, says that this is due to the changing economic and social climate with suppliers realising they must offer tangible rewards to tempt the "footloose" customer to remain loyal.

Research among more than 700 consumers found that loyal shoppers tend to spend twice as much as free-wheeling shoppers at their first-choice store. This is particularly true when it comes to grocery shopping where loyal shoppers spend up to four times as much.

But the report's author, Professor Steve Worthington, of Staffordshire University, found that increasing competition from supermarkets, petrol stations and airlines as well as traditional debit and credit cards has led customers to be more discerning about the programmes offered.

"Customers are actively looking for the best loyalty scheme to join," Professor Worthington said. "They are no longer passive recipients of schemes bolted

onto other profits... Rather, customers are now becoming more aware of their individual "value" to the competing suppliers of goods and services and they are consciously looking to be rewarded for their patronage."

For every £3,000 spent customers now have a wide choice of rewards ranging from a free meal for two (American Express), £30 off a British Gas bill (Goldfish) or £120 off your mortgage (Bradford and Bingley Building Society).

Actual monetary value for every £100 spent varies considerably, from £4 at Bradford & Bingley to 20-25p on the TSB Truistcard. Most cards have a real rate of return on money spent of around 1 per cent although it can vary from 0.25 to 4 per cent. The three supermarket group loyalty cards - Tesco, Sainsbury and Sainsbury - all offer £30 off a grocery bill for every £3,000 spent.

The future of such programmes, Professor Worthington concludes, is the development of alliances between different kinds of companies. Shell "Smart" points can already be redeemed at John Menzies or converted into air miles and Tesco Clubcard points can be collected at B&Q stores.

However, the professor warns companies against complacency. A loyalty programme, no matter how attractive, is "not a panacea for a poorly run organisation", he said. "Consumers will no longer tolerate organisations which fail to respond to their needs."

DAILY POEM

Present Discontents

by Edmund Blunden

Seeking no more
The agonies of to-morrow's peace or war,
I can think only of to-day in terms
That no 'great journal' ridicules or confirms.
This sky and earth
In my impression certainly seem worth
Some hours of my concern, and maybe yours:
Rooks, peewits, herons I consult to-day,
If I can find them in the glades and moors,
And if they have some truths to flash my way.

Should they say no,
I do not doubt some coral-berried tree,
Slenderest and finest she where many grow,
Will well contrive to catch me suddenly.

And mark that tower
High on the ridge, cool-lighted and austere;
As if I over before imagined power,
His quiet domination fills me here,
While long, long centuries throng my tiny hour,
And the lark cries to the sun - in this or any year.

The centenary of Edmund Blunden's birth on 1 November was marked this year by a small ceremony in Poets' Corner, Westminster Abbey. Blunden wrote more war verse than any other poet of the First World War, but, unlike Siegfried Sassoon, for example, he continued as a poet until his death in 1974. Still, he wrote: "My experiences in the First World War have haunted me all my life, and [I have] it seemed, lived in that world rather than this." Duckworth has recently published *Overtones of War*, a volume of selected poems by Blunden from 1914-1968, edited and introduced by Martin Taylor.

politics

The women in the House reveal their secret agenda

There are not many inhabitants of Westminster who remind one of famous movie stars. And Elizabeth Peacock is no exception. The blonde Tory member for Batley and Spen is best known for having advocated the televised flogging of miscreants – the punishment to be meted out as part of the National Lottery programme (the idea flourished when Anthea Turner's agent demanded a cut for her).

But during the dying moments of environment question



DAVID AARONOVITCH

time – just as the chamber was filling up for Prime Minister's Questions – Speaker Betty (obviously in a pleasant reverie) called upon Elizabeth Taylor to

ask her supplementary on open-cast mining in the Batley area. In fact she called her twice, before realising that Ms Taylor was not available, and that Ms Peacock would have to suffice.

By the time she corrected her mistake, it was too late. Most of MPs too – had begun to wonder what Liz would have asked and how. Clad in a gigantic fur, her eyes kohled, her jewellery dripping from car and finger, her every surface manicured and coloured (a hit like a very

expensive Michael Fabricant), would she have arisen and said "Thank you Madam Speaker on my behalf and on behalf of my very good friend, Michael Jackson, who wanted so much to be here with us this afternoon. Is the minister aware...?"

And what other unexpected superstars of the silver screen also lurk beneath the quotidian exteriors of those on the green benches, in Betty's imagination? Clint Howard? Errol Hestline (dig those tights)? It was the last laugh we had.

Soon we were all caught up in one of those fractious and charming occasions which will punctuate the period between now and the blessed relief of the election. As is customary, it began with a Tory saying that unemployment was less than zero in her constituency, but would shoot up to Great Depression levels within minutes of a Labour victory.

When Tony Blair stood up it was pretty obvious to everyone that he would seek to make capital out of the previous night's

gan vote, contrasting government pusillanimity with his own iron resolve. So, just below me, Mr Major had his line well prepared, complete with quotes and cut-throats he had probably practised with in front of the mirror.

But Tony Blair had – in the words of *Blackadder's* Baldrick – a "cunning plan". He asked a question that no one was expecting at all, concerning the failure (despite an obscure promise some two years ago) to get rid of mixed wards in hospitals. This completely threw the PM.

"We seek to make progress", he floundered, before recovering himself enough to plunder the large supply of spare National Health Service statistics that he keeps in a corner of his head.

"Yaaaargh," yelled the Toby Belch-like figure of George Foulkes from the back of the Labour benches at the Prime Minister. "Gaaaargh," bellowed the death-head features of Tory David Shaw at Mr Blair. "Order!" shouted Speaker Betty at all of them.

But why (apart from wrong-

footing the PM) had Tony picked this issue? The answer emerged only with the last question of the session when Margaret Hodge was called. Was the PM aware how insulting his answer to her leader would have been to millions of women forced to endure the dangle bits of pyramidal chaps in mixed wards?

Aha! Women! The gender gap! All became clear. And there are still 161 shopping days till the election. No wonder Betty was dreaming of Liz.

Ministers being sneaky over euro, say MPs

JOHN RENTOUL and DIANE COYLE

The Government faces a back-bench uprising today as preparations for the European single currency exposed the divisions in both Conservative and Labour parties.

Tory MPs are furious at what they see as the Government "sneaking through" plans they fear would tie the pound to the euro even if Britain stays out of monetary union. And Gordon Brown, the shadow chancellor, came under pressure from the Trades Union Congress to adopt a more positive approach to the single currency.

John Redwood, last year's Tory leadership challenger, said EU plans for "reinforced convergence procedures" to be imposed on countries which do not adopt the euro would mean Britain could lose its opt-out from the discipline of the single currency.

Documents to be vetted by MPs in a committee session this morning include plans to increase pressures on non-joiners to bring their economies into line with euro countries, including a new exchange-rate mechanism, and a stability pact, to impose large fines on countries which join the euro and fail to keep to budget limits.

In the documents, Kenneth

Clarke, the Chancellor, defends convergence rules, and says that whether or not Britain converts to the euro, "policies aimed towards convergence – low inflation and sound public finances – are sound in their own right".

John Monks, general secretary of the TUC, said whichever party wins the election will face a choice between joining the first wave of European Monetary Union from 1 January 1999 or seeing Britain isolated in Europe.

The wait-and-see option, reaffirmed by Mr Brown in his speech to the City last night, carries the risk that the UK would find it hard to join later on satisfactory terms, Mr Monks argued. Britain's negative approach had already "poisoned the water" for any new prime minister.

Mr Brown confirmed Labour would hold a referendum if it decided to join "in the course of the next parliament", but Mr Monks warned that it should not be used as an excuse to delay entry.

Today the Government relegates the most important issue facing the country to an obscure standing committee of mostly obscure MPs. Instead of Mr Clarke facing Mr Brown across the despatch box in the Chamber to discuss EU plans for the

euro, Phillip Oppenheim, the most junior Treasury minister, faces Mike O'Brien, Mr Brown's number four, in a committee room upstairs.

The Government was condemned by 144 back-bench MPs, including 94 Tories, for refusing to debate the plans on the floor of the House.

A motion by Jimmy Hood, Labour chairman of the all-party European Legislation committee, said the plans "raise questions of legal and political importance" and should be debated by the whole House. As well most of the Tory Euro-sceptic "usual suspects", the motion was also signed by pro-Europeans Hugh Dykes, Sir David Knox, Peter Bottomley and Sir Terence Higgins.

Mr Dykes said: "The essence of the ministerial posture is to say, 'Don't let's discuss it, it's too awkward, let's push it to one side'. It is the most important subject facing the nation. I believe the public will get increasingly in favour of it as they discuss it."

And David Heathcoat-Amory, the former Treasury minister, said: "These regulations will set up a massive transfer of powers away from the House of Commons and I want that properly debated, properly voted on, so that everyone can know what we're doing."



This Is An Example Of
Quarantine Kennels In Kent
That Are Conditions Under Which
Your Pets Are Kept In Quarantine
**Quarantine
Is A Trade
Not A Policy**

Best friends: Passports for Pets campaigners lobbying Parliament yesterday against quarantine rules which they say allow cruelty in kennels. Photograph: Peter Macdiarmid

PRIME MINISTER'S QUESTIONS

THE SCORE

John Major
3/10

Tony Blair
7/10

THEMES OF THE DAY

"Low levels of unemployment in my constituency" (Anne Winterton, C)
"Congestion, Graham Riddick, C, Colne Valley"
"Education Boards in Northern Ireland (John Hume, SDLP, Foyle)"
"Steel (Rosamund Cunningham, SNP Perth and Kinross)"

BLAIR'S ATTACK

Blair had been expected to ask questions about handgun but instead asked three questions on the government's promise to end mixed wards in NHS hospitals. Major did not know whether to be glad or worried by Blair's

GOOD DAY

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CENTRAL AFRICA
URGENT APPEAL FOR AID

Thousands of refugees are facing yet more hardship as they return to Rwanda without food, water or shelter. Thousands more remain scattered throughout Zaire. All of these people still desperately need our help.

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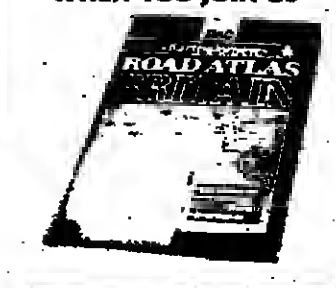
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'Nato poses no threat,' says Russia

Nato no longer poses a threat to Russia, the Russian defence minister Igor Rodionov said last night. General Rodionov was speaking after a meeting in Moscow with Michael Portillo, the British Secretary of State for Defence. Russian military leaders have repeatedly raised concerns about Nato's planned eastward expansion to embrace the new democracies of Eastern Europe.

Mr Portillo will today address the Russian general staff academy and is expected to make further proposals for military co-operation between Russia and the Western alliance. Christopher Bellamy - Moscow

Turks to block use of Nato equipment

The Turkish Foreign Minister, Tansu Ciller, said yesterday that her country would block the use of Nato equipment by the Western European Union (WEU) because of Greek objections to Ankara's participation in WEU actions.

"Turkey will block all the support of Nato," she told reporters. "The WEU can do nothing without the support of Nato." According to a Turkish journalist, Ms Ciller said that Greece did not want Turkey, an associate member of the WEU, to participate in WEU activities such as peace-keeping and humanitarian aid. *Reuter - Ostend*

Hijacker jailed for 1977 attack

Suhaila Andrawes, the only Palestinian terrorist to have survived the hijacking of a Lufthansa plane to Mogadishu in 1977, was jailed for 12 years yesterday by a Hamburg court.

Andrawes, aged 42, had been convicted in Somalia and sentenced to 20 years in jail, but was released after a year. She was discovered living in Norway and was extradited to Germany in 1995. The three other hijackers were shot dead when special German forces stormed the plane. *Imre Karacs - Bonn*

Mayor to be Romania PM

The popular mayor of Bucharest was designated as Romania's future prime minister yesterday, two days after the reformist Emil Constantinescu won presidential elections, ousting former Communists. Officials of the Peasant Party (PNICD), the largest party in a new parliament, said party leaders had chosen Victor Gorbun to head the country's first coalition government not led by ex-Communists. *Reuter - Bucharest*

Rabbi's bones rest in peace

Disciples of Rabbi Nahman of Bratslav, a Jewish sage buried in Ukraine, tried for three nights last week to tunnel to his grave in the town of Uman and smuggle his bones to Israel, the *Ma'ariv* daily reported. *Reuter - Jerusalem*

Zambia set to re-elect leader

President Frederick Chiluba and his ruling party appeared headed for sweeping victory in Zambia national elections boycotted by the former President Kenneth Kaunda's main opposition group.

With results in from 58 of the 150 constituencies countrywide by 5pm yesterday, the ruling Movement for Multiparty Democracy had won 52 parliament seats, election officials said. *AP - Lusaka*

Neo-Nazi on trial in SA

The leader of a neo-Nazi white-extremist group went on trial yesterday on an attempted murder charge involving an assault on a black man on 25 March.

Eugene TerreBlanche, head of the Afrikaner Resistance Movement, known by its Afrikaans-language initials AWB, pleaded not guilty to the attempted murder count and to a separate charge of assault with intent to commit grievous bodily harm to the man in Ventersdorp, a farming town west of Johannesburg where the AWB has its headquarters. *AP - Potchefstroom*

King clings to throne

Cambodia's King Norodom Sihanouk denied he plans to abdicate and enter politics, saying he would remain on the throne until the turn of the century. The 74-year-old king is in China, where he is receiving medical treatment. *Reuter - Phnom Penh*

Oxfam Continuing crisis in Central Africa

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All in the line of duty for Germany's Bond



Werner Mauss: Regarded as hero in the Fatherland

Imre Karacs
Bonn

Germany's top secret agent, who went missing several years ago, has been found in a Colombian jail, arrested in Medellin on Sunday night as he was trying to smuggle the kidnapped wife of a German executive out of the country.

Werner Mauss, a privatised James Bond licensed to mingle with terrorists and pay them off, was travelling in the company of a bogus wife under one of his numerous aliases. The "couple" had six forged passports between them, a .38 calibre Smith & Wesson revolver, and three gold credit cards issued by the Dresdner Bank.

According to Colombian police, Mr Mauss had paid \$1.8m

dollars (£1m) in ransom for Brigitte Schöne, the wife of the former local manager of BASF, a large German chemicals concern with extensive interests in Medellin. She had been abducted three months earlier by guerrillas of the pro-Cuba National Liberation Army (ELN).

Mr Mauss was identified with the help of the distinguishing mark listed in his Interpol files: a missing thumb tip. The Colombian press also reported that he was carrying a letter issued by the German embassy in Bogotá, certifying that the "couple" had lost their passports and were on official business.

What this might have been, however, remains a mystery. The payment of ransom money is illegal in Colombia, but Mr Mauss could have still engi-

neered the kidnap victim's release locally, avoiding the extra complication of chartering a plane and fleeing abroad. "I myself wondered why I was given a false passport and was to fly to Venezuela," Ms Schöne said after being freed.

Breaking the law, has never stopped Mr Mauss, 56, who is described by the former head of Germany's Federal Criminal Office as "our secret weapon". He does not like to use his real name and is on the run from several convictions. Last year, a Belgian court sentenced him to jail in absentia for trying to bribe the country's police chief.

He may be a rogue, but he is handsomely rewarded for his actions and hailed as a hero in the Fatherland. His position is that of a "V-Man" - a freelance

agent hired by the government or large companies to carry out missions that are off-limits to the state. His name does not appear on the staff list of the BND, the German secret service, but official payments have been traced to his bank account.

Mr Mauss, who runs his business out of a fortified villa in Germany's Hunsrück region and flies a private jet, first found the limelight in 1976. He had been "sponsored" by three companies and the government - the latter to the tune of DM250,000 (£100,000) - to hunt down Rolf Pöhl, an urban terrorist. Mr Mauss found his man in Athens, promptly arrested him, but Germany never succeeded in having their suspect extradited. Mr Pöhl still lives in Greece, eking out

a meagre existence by giving German lessons.

More successful was his mission, in 1976, to recover treasures stolen from Cologne Cathedral. His triumph led to more commissions, and then in the lucrative kidnap market.

In recent years, he has been linked to even more unorthodox activities, and his name surfaces in the biggest unsolved puzzle of the past decade. In October 1987, Uwe Barschel, a prominent Christian Democrat leader in the centre of a murky political scandal, was found murdered in a bath tub in a Geneva hotel room. Very little is known about the affair, except that Mr Mauss was in Geneva that day and met Mr Barschel. That was the last time anyone saw Mr Barschel alive.

Sex row menaces Belgian coalition

Sarah Helm
Brussels

The Belgian parliament yesterday launched a commission of inquiry into claims that a Deputy Prime Minister, Elio di Rupo, had sex with young boys.

The latest paedophile scandal poses a serious threat to the coalition government of Jean-Luc Dehaene, still reeling from the Marc Dutroux child-sex murders, which brought claims of government incompetence and cover-up.

Political figures predicted yesterday that Mr di Rupo, who is also Minister for Telecommunications, may be forced to resign, destabilising the centre-left coalition.

After days of rumour-mongering in the Flemish press, the Belgian authorities confirmed that police were investigating allegations of paedophilia against Mr di Rupo, a Francophone Socialist of Italian descent, and against Jean Pierre Gaffe, a minister in the Francophone regional government.

The allegations are not connected with the Dutroux atrocities, which involved the killing of at least four young girls and abuse of many more.

Mr di Rupo and Mr Gaffe, who are openly homosexual, vehemently deny the accusations, saying they are pleased inquiries are being launched to clear their names.

Mr Dehaene described the allegations as "sick and mad", according to one press report. Several commentators have warned against an anti-gay witch-hunt, saying there is no evidence that the men engaged in sex with partners other than consenting adults.

Nevertheless, the evidence against the two politicians has emerged as a direct result of the increased surveillance of public figures which followed public accusations that the Dutroux case was covered up in high places.

Reports yesterday suggested the evidence against the men had been presented by callers to a paedophile "hotline" set up in the wake of the Dutroux case in an attempt

to gather more evidence against those abusing children sexually.

In the public mind, the latest allegations are certain to confirm some of the widespread fears that corruption runs deep into the Belgian judicial and political system. Last month more than 250,000 people marched through Brussels demanding that the authorities account for their failure to avert the horrors perpetrated by Dutroux.

Public anger at the Belgian political class has also been fuelled by revelations about a se-

It is unjust and base to take against citizens solely because of their sexual preferences

ries of unsolved corruption scandals, and, in particular, the murder of André Cools, the deputy prime minister, shot dead in Liège in 1991.

Claims of a cover-up in the Cools case threw new light on the murky underworld of Liège, in Francophone Belgium, where the Dutroux gang was also known to operate. Liège, with a large Italian population, is an outpost of Italian Mafia gangs.

The Cools inquiry has led to three high-level political resignations of Francophone Socialists since September. Both the Dutroux case and the Cools case have exposed the invidious nature of political patronage in Belgium throughout police forces and the judiciary.

Several commentators were unrestrained in detailing how Mr di Rupo liked to frequent gay bars in Brussels. "We believe it is particularly unjust and base to take against citizens solely because of their sexual preferences," said Michel Marteau in a commentary in *Le Soir*.

"In Belgium, as in nearly all countries, homosexuality is not



Eye of the storm: Deputy Prime Minister Elio di Rupo, who admits being homosexual but denies unsubstantiated reports of paedophilia

may be exploiting recent public disquiet to bring down the government by attacking Francophone politicians. The Flemish papers yesterday were unrestrained in detailing how Mr di Rupo liked to frequent gay bars in Brussels.

"We believe it is particularly unjust and base to take against citizens solely because of their sexual preferences," said Michel Marteau in a commentary in *Le Soir*.

"In Belgium, as in nearly all countries, homosexuality is not

a crime... Let's wait for justice to do its work."

In an effort to contain the latest upsurge of public anger, the Belgian parliament moved swiftly to launch a commission of inquiry, which will make a recommendation on whether Mr di Rupo's immunity from prosecution should be lifted. The Deputy Prime Minister then face charges before the courts. Regional parliaments were also meeting to consider a committee of inquiry into the case of Mr Gaffe.

The scandal, however, looks certain to escalate. While the seriousness of the latest allegations has yet to be tested, the ferment they have already caused reveals how vulnerable the country's political establishment has become since the Dutroux affair first erupted. The Belgian press appear bent on exposing any allegations, however tenuous, against public figures, having taken their cue from the recent mass demonstrations of anger by the Belgian people.

Bosnians remove minister to get US arms

Sarajevo (Reuter) - Kresimir Zubak, the President of Bosnia's Muslim-Croat Federation, has finally agreed to replacement of the federation's deputy defence minister, clearing the way for a massive shipment of US arms to the former Yugoslav republic, a US official said yesterday.

"Zubak informed the United States that he will sign the official order replacing deputy minister Hasan Cengic effective on Wednesday," said a State Department official speaking in Sarajevo.

The United States earlier refused to unload \$100m worth of military equipment bound for the federation army unless and until Mr Cengic, a Muslim, was removed from office because of his close ties with Iran.

The American Condor transport ship has been idling in the Adriatic Ocean for weeks, laden with tanks, helicopters, assault rifles, machine-guns, ammunition, tactical radios and other military equipment. A US special envoy James Pardew said the material could begin off-loading in the Croatian port of Ploce today, now the Cengic impasse has been resolved.

The federation's ethnic Croat defence minister resigned on Monday, after Cengic's allies in the Bosnian Muslim SDA party made it clear that they would only let him go if his Bosnian Croat counterpart resigned at the same time.

The game of threats and blackmail underlined the tension and suspicion bedevilling relations between the two ethnic communities in the federation, which was cobbled together largely under external, US pressure, in order to act as a counterweight to the well-armed, virtually independent Bosnian Serb entity.

Sarajevo (AP) - A Bosnian Serb man damaged his home by accident when he tried to fire a grenade at his wife, UN officials said yesterday. The incident in the northwestern town of Bijeljina was the climax of a domestic dispute, that spilled out onto the street.

"The woman tried to flee the house but the husband followed her with a bazooka," said UN spokesman Alexander Ivankov. "He fired the bazooka at his wife, missed, and hit the house, causing serious damage." The man, Pero Tolic, is being held by police.

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Teenagers face death for baby's murder

Rupert Cornwell
Washington

A few months ago, their life was an American picture postcard — high-school sweethearts from the affluent New Jersey suburbs, bound for university, without a visible care in the world. Now that world has collapsed. She is in prison and he is on the run, wanted for infanticide and facing the death penalty.

Yesterday, police were searching for Brian Peterson, 18, who is charged with killing the newborn son he helped deliver in a Delaware motel room last Tuesday. The mother, Amy Grossberg, is already in prison, accused of the first degree murder of the infant, whose battered body was found in a dustbin at the motel. Meanwhile, half the country wonders how such a tragedy could have happened.

For everyone who knew them, they were a perfect couple. He was a school sports star beginning his first year at a private university in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. Ms Grossberg, also 18, was, according to neighbours, a "dream daughter", a bright student with talent as an artist, who had just entered the University of Delaware.

There was, however, one problem: she was pregnant and eight days ago went into labour.

As police reconstruct the story, Mr Peterson made the

three-hour drive to pick her up at her lodgings, and check in at a nearby motel. There, he helped deliver the baby, which he put in a plastic bag and dropped in a dumpster behind the motel. He then drove Ms Grossberg to her dormitory and returned to Gettysburg.

Mr Peterson has told investigators the baby was alive when it was abandoned. But on the strength of an autopsy which found the infant died of skull fractures caused by "blunt force trauma and shaking", prosecutors brought murder charges. The death penalty can be sought in cases in Delaware where the killing is intentional and the victim is under 14.

Their decision has prompted outrage, and accusations that the state is rushing to judgment before the facts are in. "This case is the result of children having children," said Murray Richman, president of New York State Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers.

But despite the almost non-existent prospect of one ever being handed down, the Delaware deputy Attorney General, Peter Letang, seems determined to press ahead. "When a baby is put outside in cold weather, in addition to having head trauma," he said, "in our view that is intentional homicide."

Along with horror and pity, the dominant reaction has been



Sweethearts: Amy Grossberg and Brian Peterson at a high-school ball. Photograph: AP

bafflement: Why, the press has asked, did the couple not seek help, offer the child for adoption or even arrange an abortion? No less a mystery is how Ms Grossberg managed to carry her pregnancy to term, un-noticed by her family or friends.

The whole story might never have come to light had Ms Grossberg not developed post-natal complications. Back in her dormitory that same Tuesday evening, she collapsed and was rushed to hospital where she recounted what had happened. At

the same time, her boyfriend was confessing to a university counsellor in Gettysburg.

After initially deciding not to press charges, police at the weekend issued a warrant for Mr Peterson. When they went

to his father's house in Long Island where he was believed to be staying, they found it empty. His lawyers are said to be urging him to turn himself in, but by yesterday afternoon Mr Peterson still had not done so.

Dithering in Europe leaves Korea staring into nuclear abyss

Richard Lloyd Parry
Seoul

The fragile peace on the Korean peninsula, the world's last Cold War flashpoint, is in jeopardy if European governments fail to agree on a 15 million ecu (£11.5m) package to provide oil in the stricken government of North Korea.

European Commission officials are engaged in delicate negotiations with the Korean Energy Development Organisation (KEDO), a joint American-Japanese-South Korean body formed after a scare in 1994, when Pyongyang appeared to be developing nuclear weapons. A funding crisis has left KEDO on the edge of collapse and it has asked the Europeans for a 15 million ecu annual contribution in return for membership of the organisation.

But differences between European Union member states threaten to thwart the deal. And without European money, KEDO officials fear it will fall apart, increasing the risk that Pyongyang will restart its nuclear programme and plunge the peninsula back into crisis.

KEDO represents the best hope in decades for peace on the peninsula. The organisation was born as a consequence of the Framework Agreement, signed in Geneva in 1994, which temporarily defused fears of a

nuclear confrontation. In spring that year, American spy satellites revealed that the North Koreans were stockpiling spent fuel rods from Soviet-made nuclear reactors. These had the potential for generating plutonium capable of being used in nuclear warheads. After months of negotiations, North Korea agreed to freeze their operations.

KEDO was formed to fulfil the other side of the bargain: the provision of safer, light-water reactors costing \$5bn (£3bn), to be paid for by South Korea and Japan. The Geneva accord also promised heavy fuel oil to tide the North over while the safe reactors are being installed.

The annual cost of the fuel shipments is around \$55m, of which \$25m has been approved by the US. Britain and Japan have made lesser contributions. But without more substantial participation by Europe, KEDO has little hope of fulfilling its obligations. And last week, Pyongyang's official news agency threatened a restart to nuclear development if there were delays to the KEDO programme.

KEDO's troubles came at a time of increasing instability in Korea, which has been divided between the Stalinist North and the US-backed South since the end of the Second World War. With the collapse of the Soviet bloc, North Korea's economy plummeted. In 1995 the North

made an unprecedented appeal for foreign aid, raising hopes of dialogue. But Pyongyang refuses to talk directly with anyone but the US — which insists that any settlement must be reached between the two Koreas. Hopes were pinned on a proposal for four-way talks, including the two Koreas, the US and China — but these were dashed in September when a North Korean submarine ran aground in the South, while engaged on an apparent spy mission. The outrage this provoked in Seoul has jeopardised the Geneva agreement.

"We cannot keep the nuclear programme frozen any longer only to get heavy oil... with no importance given to when the light-water reactors will be provided," Pyongyang's news agency said last week, accusing the US of "breaking its promise" in "unilaterally" delaying the implementation of the agreement.

Pyeongyang will today close its liaison office in the demilitarised zone between the two countries in protest.

"We're at a very tricky point, and the European contribution is very important to the whole thing," said one observer in Seoul yesterday. "It seems people have to be brought to the point where they're staring into the abyss before they make up their minds. We were close to the abyss in 1994, but people have forgotten that."

"Natural Aphrodisiacs That Really Work"

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Candid cameras catch agent snapping

Washington — The final piece of evidence against Harold James Nicholson came into focus for CIA spy catchers on November 12: Concealed cameras in his CIA office caught him kneeling under his desk photographing secret documents.

Four days later, FBI agents, who had been trailing and eavesdropping on him for months, arrested Nicholson at Washington's Dulles International Airport. He was charged on Monday with spying for Russia since June 1994.

CIA director John Deutch said the Nicholson case is not likely to be the last involving alleged spying by U.S. agents. "There will be other cases that involve the CIA. There will be other cases that involve other national security agencies."

Nicholson, 46, of Burke, Virginia, is the highest-ranking CIA officer to face espionage charges. The FBI suspects he sold the names of all new CIA trainee agents in the past two years, a breach of security that could jeopardize lives.

Among the evidence against Nicholson cited by the FBI was a computer disk containing a file with information on private individuals who often provide the CIA with information they gain on their travels.

Deutch would not explain precisely what alerted the CIA to Nicholson. He said several pieces of evidence appeared at virtually the same time, including questionable answers on a routine lie-detector test in October 1995. The FBI said it detected a pattern of twice-yearly trips by Nicholson from 1994 to 1996 to Asia — where he allegedly met with his Russian "handlers".

Early this month an FBI search of Nicholson's office at CIA headquarters in Langley, Virginia, found about 40 documents relating to Russia in a black folder on his desk. Some were classified "top secret," and some were at the higher "sensitive compartmented information" classification.

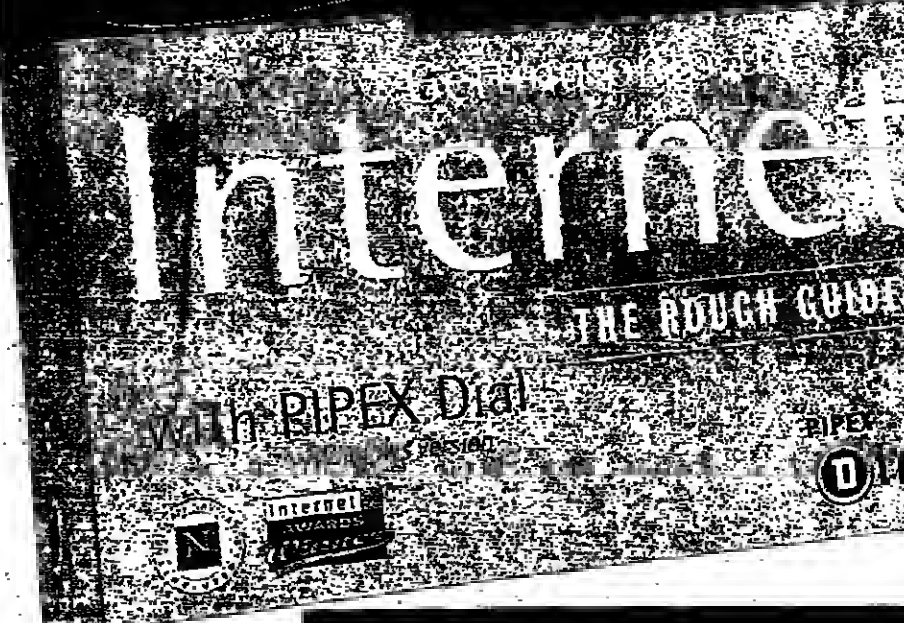
On 12 November, Nicholson asked for and received a CIA-issued document camera. He took it to his office, closed the door and placed the camera under his desk, according to the FBI affidavit.

He then took some secret documents from the folder, knelt on the floor and spent about 30 minutes photographing them. He did more that same evening and again on 13 November, the FBI said.

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EU sounds alarm at Belarus showdown

Phil Reeves
Moscow

Britain, France, Germany and Italy yesterday threw their weight behind growing condemnation of plans by President Alexander Lukashenko of Belarus to press ahead with a referendum which would turn his nation into a near-dictatorship.

They protested at the "illegal nature" of the poll in which he is seeking a constitution which would give him autocratic powers, including the right to appoint judges, top election officials, and many members of a new, two-chamber legislature. The protest, following expressions of alarm from the US, came as Belarus lumbered towards a showdown between the President and parliament and which has sent tremors from the Baltic to the Black Sea.

MPs, fearing Mr Lukashenko's security forces may close it, have been occupying parliament, in the capital, Minsk, since Friday. The Prime Minister, Mikhail Chigir, resigned in protest over the referendum.

Eighty MPs also signed a petition for the President's impeachment. Under the constitution (which Mr Lukashenko has a long record of ignoring), this must be approved by the Constitutional Court before going back to parliament, where it requires a two-thirds vote to pass.

While the West seethed, a more cautious expression of concern was issued by Russia, the key player in efforts to resolve the crisis. Moscow exerts great influence on the former Soviet republic, which depends on it for gas and oil. A Kremlin spokesman said President Boris Yeltsin and his Prime Minister, Viktor Chernomyrdin, were "alarmed" and hoped "the art of political compromise will replace the ambitions and confrontations among politicians".

Officially, voting day is Sunday, although the result is viewed as a foregone conclusion unless the poll is cancelled and a compromise is found. For there are signs aplenty that the President has little regard for fair play. He has fired the head of the Central Election Commission, Viktor Gonchar, who complained of irregularities among thousands of absentee ballots already cast.

For months Mr Lukashenko has excluded opponents from the heavily censored state-run media while using it to advertise his cause.

If he wins, a confrontation with parliament seems inevitable but the outcome is unclear. He has the loyalty of his 1,500-strong presidential guard but the position of Belarus's KGB and armed forces is less easily predicted. "There is potential for this to blow up," a Western source said. "It would only take one spark to set everything off." Last night parliament offered to abandon a second, parallel referendum which proposes the presidency be scrapped, if Mr Lukashenko dropped his. His response was unknown, but his posture to date is not encouraging.

He recently said it was too late to change his plans, and told opponents to be ready to flee if he won. His style has won him unfavourable publicity in the West, particularly when he complimented Hitler during a media interview.

Poland, Ukraine and the Baltic states have all shown signs of unease about their troublesome neighbour.

Nor are matters helped by the fact that Belarus still has 18 former Soviet SS-25 intercontinental missiles, which it is due - under international arms agreements - to return to Russia soon, but which it may seek to keep as bargaining tools.



Flagging support: A couple outside parliament in Minsk backing the MPs' stand

Photograph: AFP

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Castro and the Pope face up to better times

Anne Hanley
Rome

Fidel Castro did not kiss the Pope's ring but this minor detail was ignored in the emotion of the moment: the *lider maximo* had come to visit the *pontifex maximus*, opening up a new era in relations between the world's most powerful theocracy and one of its very few remaining communist states.

It was 10.45am yesterday when Castro's motorcade swept into the Vatican, and the Cuban leader was ushered up into the Pope's private apartments. A brief bow, a few words of greeting and John Paul II and Fidel disappeared into the library for talks which, the Vatican spokesman Joaquín Navarro Valls said, focused on "normalisation of the conditions under which the Catholic Church works in Cuba" and "national and international reconciliation".

Castro also issued an invitation to the Pope to visit his Caribbean island. The Pope accepted, and is now widely expected to add a Cuban stopover to his itinerary for a pastoral visit to Brazil in October next year.

Yesterday's private audience was the culmination of several years of slow thaw in relations

between the Holy See and Cuba. After decades of hostility, and harassment by Cuban authorities of Catholic clergy and organisations, the two countries got down to serious dialogue in 1989. In 1992 Cuba changed its constitution to describe the island as a lay, rather than an atheist state.

Pope John Paul refrained from any of the embraces and handshakes that he often lavishes on visiting dignitaries

But it was not until last month, when the Vatican's "foreign minister" Archbishop Jean-Louis Tauran met Castro in Havana, that a meeting between the Pope and the Catholic-educated Castro became a strong possibility.

Since his arrival in Italy four days ago for last week's World Food Summit, Castro has been locked with the Pope in what at times gave every appearance of

a competition to appear more conciliatory.

The Pope kicked these goodwill overtures off in his inaugural speech to the summit, lashing out at trade embargoes which bring hunger to innocent civilians. The reference was clearly to US sanctions against Cuba which have been in place since 1962.

Castro, on the other hand, made sure that the press was well within hearing range when he stressed to Italian Premier Romano Prodi that "the revolution has created no martyrs amongst the men of the cloth".

In a meeting at the Italy Cuba Association, he confessed that "were I not a politician, I would take myself off to a monastery".

Despite the build-up, both Castro and the Pope betrayed no signs of great emotion when they finally met yesterday, and the Pope refrained from any of the embraces and lengthy handshakes that he often lavishes on visiting dignitaries. Details of contents of Castro's audience, and his ensuing meeting with Secretary of State, Cardinal Angelo Sodano, were, as is customary in the Vatican, kept a closely guarded secret, although it was not difficult to read be-



Gestures of goodwill: Pope John Paul II and the Cuban leader Fidel Castro meet at the Vatican yesterday. After their private talks in the papal library, the pontiff accepted an invitation to visit Cuba and is expected to add the island to his October visit to Brazil. Photograph: Reuters

tween the lines of the official version handed down by the Vatican Press office.

"Normalising the conditions under which the Church works in Cuba" refers to the severe restrictions placed on visiting clergy and on Catholic aid organisations working in Cuba.

In a Press briefing, Mr Navarro Valls placed great emphasis on the fact that an island with the population of 11 million, where Catholics represent some 97 per cent, has only 200 priests ministering to its spiritual needs.

"International reconciliation", on the other hand, is a

clear reference to Cuba's continuing difficult role on the world scene, and to the US trade embargo against it. Mr Navarro Valls claimed that the sanctions themselves were not explicitly discussed: "There was no need, and the Church's position was made perfectly clear

at the World Food Summit," he said.

"National reconciliation" would seem to cover human rights abuses in Cuba but Castro, during his visit, has been keen to stress that - in the case of Cuba at least - such concepts are firmly in the eye of the beholder.

In a meeting with Italy's Foreign Minister, Lamberto Dini, on Monday, Mr Castro listed "the many initiatives undertaken in defence of the individual and the citizen," and underlined that Cuba's electoral system "has the consensus of the majority of our citizens."

We'll set ourselves ablaze insist beauty protesters

Bangalore, India (Reuters) - An Indian woman again threatened to upstage Miss World's crowning moment by setting herself ablaze after a court said yesterday that the beauty pageant can go ahead. One man burnt himself to death last week to protest against the show, which opponents say offends women and Indian culture.

"My protests will be peaceful. By burning myself I will not be disrupting the show. We will go ahead with our earlier plan," Kina Narayana Shashikala, leader of the Mahila Jagrau Samiti (Forum for Awakening Women), said, after a court rejected the group's petition to block the pageant.

The group had held its threat of self-immolation in abeyance until the court decision was known.

"We declined to ban the show," R.P. Sethi, the chief justice of the Karnataka High Court. "The state government should not prevent peaceful

protests."

Ms Shashikala has said several of her followers will join the 20,000 people expected to attend the Miss World crowning ceremony on 23 November and take cyanide pills before setting their silk saris ablaze.

Julia Morley, president of Miss World International said: "Obviously it is a very sad situation when somebody is prepared to do this without finding out what we are all about."

People attending events at the Miss World gala have been frisked by police, who confiscated cigarette lighters and bags.

In addition to a *de facto* ban on smoking, the court on Tuesday told pageant organisers that no alcohol should be served at the Chinnaswamy cricket stadium where the open air show is being held.

The finale is expected to be seen by two billion television viewers worldwide.

A protester against the

Michael Jackson concert in Bombay in late October also threatened to burn himself but was detained by police before he could commit suicide. Under Indian law, police can take people into custody as a preventive measure.

A police chief and senior court official were assigned by the high court to watch the beauty parade on Saturday to ensure there is no indecent exposure of bodies, nudity or obscenity. "Absolutely I agree with that wholeheartedly," Julia Morley said when informed of the ruling.

The ruling Janata Dal in Karnataka, which is Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda's party, has supported Miss World coming to the state capital, which is known as India's "Garden City", but any politicians hoping for a free ticket can think again.

The court said that people in the state government will have to pay like anyone else.



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international

Caroline Lees reports from the secret schools where young men are trained to wage Holy War

Afghan guerrilla bases are reopened

Khost — Guerrilla training camps closed by the Taliban Islamic army are reopening — under new management. When the Taliban were formed two years ago, they promised to rid Afghanistan of such "universities", where Muslims from all over the world were taught gun-making and guerrilla warfare.

Their promise helped win support for the Islamic army, especially from the West, which linked graduates of Afghanistan camps with terrorism. Harkat-ul-Ansar (HUA), the group believed to have killed five Western hostages it kidnapped in Kashmir last year, sends all its recruits to the camps.

Ahmed Sheikh, a former London School of Economics student who kidnapped two Britons in New Delhi two years ago, said he was trained in Afghanistan.

A recent attack on the Egyptian embassy in Islamabad, Pakistan, was blamed on people who had just finished bomb-making classes across the border.

Until now, Western observers hoped that the Taliban would fulfil their pledge to ban training, especially after they closed camps near Jalalabad and Kabul. But there is evidence that at least two camps have reopened. Al Badr 1 and Al Badr 2, on the Pakistani border, were closed two months ago and 107 Pakistani trainees sent home.

But this week they are back in operation, with the same instructors and many of the same trainees. The only new thing is the management: Hezb-i-Islami, a group led by the Prime Minister, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, and which is loyal to Pres-

ident Burhanuddin Rabbani, who was expelled from Kabul in September, has been moved out, and the HUA moved in. Before the Taliban advance two years ago, camps were dotted around the country, mostly run as businesses by Mr Hekmatyar and another ally of Mr Rabbani.

Mr Hekmatyar ran camps near the Pakistani border and near Jalalabad, south-east of Kabul. The largest, Darunta, closed soon after the Taliban took that city in August. It was training 200 foreigners and is now empty.

The other owner, Abd al Rabb al Rasul Sayyaf, had camps east and west of Kabul, which have also closed. Both received millions of pounds "aid" from Middle Eastern groups in exchange for training Islamists for the "holy war".

Now the Taliban appear to want a cut. Although Mr Hekmatyar's and Mr Sayyaf's camps are empty, it is rumoured that they, like Al Badr, will soon reopen, under Taliban control.

Few would be surprised. "Afghanistan is a very good investment site for terrorism. It will always have a front line, weapons are easily and cheaply available and anything goes there," said a Western diplomat.

Jamaat-i-Islami (JII), a Pakistani group which sent members for training, intends to continue as soon as more camps reopen. Yacoubi, a JII leader, learnt to use guns and rocket launchers and received religious instruction in Afghanistan.

"I learned useful... skills, which Muslims will continue to need until we get the right of freedom of speech and freedom of expression in our own countries."



On the warpath: Fundamentalist Taliban fighters heading towards the Panjsher Valley in north-east Afghanistan, stronghold of their enemy Ahmed Shah Masood, the military chief of the ousted government. The valley is just one of many pockets of resistance to the new Taliban regime, established in Kabul last month. Photograph: Reuters



Taliban gives the nod to military training camps

Khost — There could be few better places to hide 360 trainee guerrillas than in the foothills of the Hindu Kush, in Eastern Afghanistan.

It is an isolated, lonely area, inaccessible to anyone without a pass from the local Taliban governor, or from the Pakistani authorities just over the border.

Foreigners are banned. I wore a burqa — a head-to-toe veil — to get past the Pakistani checkpoints, and managed to slip in through the back, and onto the training ground.

The 12-square-mile compound is enclosed by a high barbed wire fence and look-out posts. Apart from a blackboard, exercise equipment, ropes and hurdles which can be seen from the main gates, there are few obvious signs that this is one of Afghanistan's biggest military training centres.

The trainees are put into one of two camps: Al Badr 1 and Al Badr 2. Al Badr 1 holds about 200, mainly Pakistani, recruits. They train to fight against the Indian army in Kashmir for sep-

arate groups such as Harkat-ul-Ansar, the Pakistan-based Islamic militants. Al Badr 2 accepts up to 160 foreign trainees, especially Arabs and

There are religious classes instructing trainees in the nature of the Jihad

over the camps two months ago, they inherited them from the previous management. Had left behind, including 150 AK-47s, 70 of them brand new and still in their boxes; one tank, ten rocket launchers, a multi-barrelled rocket launcher and boxes of combat uniforms.

For the long evenings in the camps, there was a video player and a television set, with 80 video cassettes. Most of the videos were instructive films on guerrilla warfare.

They also seized motivational audio cassettes of speeches by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, the leader of Hezb-i-Islami. Music is banned in Taliban-controlled areas of Afghanistan and listening to the politically correct poems — usually about the glory of dying for Allah — is the only entertainment allowed. The families of some of the trainees do not even know where their sons are. Some trainees are young men, only 17 or 18 years old, who admitted that they had run away from home to join the Jihad.

But the training is dangerous. All of the men are given an AK-47 when they begin the course and few have any experience of how to use them. As I left the camp through the back, I passed a single grave marked by a pile of stones beside a muddy track.

"This man died during training," said my guide. "Nobody knew where he came from, his family do not even know he is dead."

STOCK PHOTOGRAPH



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Radical group has high profile at 'secret' site

The Khost training camps are supposed to be secret, but on a hill opposite the main gate the new management has provided a helpful clue to their identity: the word "Harkat-ul-Ansar" has been painstakingly spelled out in Urdu, in six-foot-high letters with white stones, writes Caroline Lees. It is a bizarre touch, adopted from the tradition of marking an area where an army regiment has its headquarters.

Harkat-ul-Ansar (HUA) is one of the most radical Islamic militant groups in the region. It is about to be officially designated a terrorist organisation and outlawed by the United States, following its involvement in recent international terrorist activities, including the kidnapping and murder of five Western hostages in Kashmir last year.

News of the group's presence in the training camps at Khost has alarmed Western diplomats in Islamabad, who describe it as "extremely serious". There was also concern about Pakistan's role in the operation of the camps.

HUA openly holds public rallies and fund-raising meetings in Pakistan. It has offices all over the country, especially in Karachi and the Punjab, where unemployment is high and re-

crutment is easy. Two trainees at Al Badr 1 told a Peshawar-based journalist, Rahimullah Yusufzai, that they had been sent for training after being recruited by the HUA at its office in Murree, north-west Pakistan.

Apart from seeming to sanction HUA's activities, Pakistani authorities are believed to know about the reopening of the camp in Khost and to turn a blind eye to the coachloads full of young men who regularly drive from Pakistan to join the training. Petrol and food for these 360 trainees is also sent across the border by Pakistani suppliers.

The Pakistani government may not play an official role in the Khost camps, but it has made access to them easy. Last year a new tarred road, the only one in the province, was built by Pakistan from Khost to Miran Shah, across the border in Pakistan.

It is in Pakistan's interest to support HUA's military training activities. Most of their camp graduates are sent to fight in Afghanistan with the Taliban against the Indian-backed former government forces, or to Kashmir to fight the Indian Army. The HUA may not fight in the name of Pakistan, but they are on the same side.

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NESCAFÉ BLEND 37

Toothless unions don't need muzzling

New Tory proposals to shackle the unions further are unnecessary and – most important, in this season of electoral calculations – unlikely to reap a political reward. The Government's latest wheeze is to publish proposals, green, white and blue, and promise to legislate for them "in the next Parliament". This allows the machinery of Whitehall to be used to work up proposals that are effectively paragraphs from the draft Tory Party manifesto. Yesterday's addition to this suspect canon of governmental literature was a Green Paper proposing yet more trade union restrictions.

It is not worth wasting much time on the specific measures proposed, for one thing because much of the detail has yet to be filled in. Legal immunity is to be removed from industrial action that is "disproportionate or excessive" – for example, we are told, action carrying a risk to health and safety. Presumably that includes any strike action in the water or electricity industries? It is a measure of this Government's disconnection from proper priorities that it cannot see that the public is now much more concerned about inadequately regulated and greedy managers in the household utilities than about their shrinking numbers of employees.

The new proposals do stop short of banning industrial action in "essential services". And increasing to a fortnight the period of notice before industrial

action can be taken is not going to thwart determined employees. A lot of this Green Paper is political posturing. But it is a performance in vain.

Two decades ago British trade unions were an unmistakable symptom and causal agent of the British disease. The unions had power but no responsibility; public distaste for their role was underlined by the number of their members who voted for Mrs Thatcher in May 1979, and in subsequent general elections. During the Eighties trade unionism was exposed to restrictive Tory legislation, and the opening of the economy to brisk competition. Union membership shrank. Industrial power passed from shop floor to boardroom. Tripartism, Britain's variant on the corporatism practised successfully across post-war Europe, withered. The union barons became outlaws.

The other great change was the emancipation of the Labour Party from the unions which had given it birth. The movement began by Neil Kinnock, and now just about realised by Tony Blair, was needed long before the challenge of the Eighties. In spite of that, the unions took their time to move on out. But recently there have been welcome signs of union leaders reaching for their own, separate political destiny. Take the speech made on European monetary union yesterday by John Monks. It was in some ways an odd speech: does the TUC really buy the deflationary effects

of the Maastricht convergence criteria, with all that they imply not just for the jobs of state employees in member countries but for "social partnership" itself? Mr Monks doubtless has his reasons. But the symbolism of his taking a different line from Labour mattered more. This is how it should be. The TUC has to become more like the AFL-CIO in the US, anxious to secure the return of Democrats, surely, but resolutely distinct in organisation and aspiration.

Those changes have cleared the field not so much for a revival of trades unionism but for a renewed acceptance of the unions' role and opportunity. The



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and the London Underground have not shifted this view. Those are not examples of resurgent Scargillism: we all know that is stone cold dead. It was the result of long years of bad management and bloody-minded and often politically-motivated union leadership.

Two core principles cover what is needed: a right to join a collective bargaining unit, and a right to take action against an employer in accepted circumstances. As a formula, common law immunity is anomalous, yes, but it still registers the public's wish for those at work to have some sanction to redress the inevitable imbalance of power between them and their employers. Labour has some useful ideas for smoothing the path of those wanting to organise. But there is no compelling case for more legislation controlling unions. Unions can only be as strong as their capacity to persuade and inspire. They will continue to attract members and find a role in some areas of employment, but they will struggle to sustain an active role in others. The shakedown of trades unionism in our society should now be allowed to follow a natural course; we don't need to meddle with it any further.

The Government's thinking about the future of the unions is on a par with its reaction to the 48-hour week – this one muddled because of the European connection. The best performing organisation commands not just the assent, but also the enthusiasm of its staff.

Trades unions, at best, can increase the difference between the cost of employment and organisational output. As collective bargainers, they can enhance the dignity and rights of individual employees. There are few economic sectors where unions can, as they once could, threaten the public interest. There will even be (rare) occasions when public inconvenience is a price the public is prepared to pay. The Government should stop living in the past; Labour should start talking about the future.

The wrong road to salvation

The Pope's excuse could be that he is enjoined by the Gospels and his stewardship of Peter's keys to welcome them all to the Vatican. But what is Fidel Castro's rationale for climbing the steps of St Peter's in order to smell the smoke of the people's opium? It is surely a bit late for priestly intercession for reprobate revolutionaries.

Cuba's future will not be resolved in Rome, or even on the streets of Havana. There is no future for this island separate from what the United States will approve or tolerate. This may not be a happy fact, but it is a geopolitical one. Cuba has more to come to terms with in Miami than in St Peter's Square.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Children let down by shift in fostering

Sir: Congratulations to Kenneth Redgrave for bringing to public notice some of the discrepancies of the social services (letter, 18 November). Having been a foster mother for 45 years, I have seen all the changes over the years.

When I first became a foster mother, you had a child and it stayed with you all through childhood, started a career, got married and brought the children to see their grandma. This is now completely impossible. The system is making the children angry and violent.

Children coming from homes because of neglect, cruelty or violence are put immediately with foster carers, instead of a period of training or rehabilitation. Often they are sent to inexperienced carers, and it breaks down. The older, more experienced carers are "thrown out", instead of being used to help and train the inexperienced (social workers do not have time for this).

Children are virtually cast out at 16. Lip service is paid to finding them accommodation, which they often cannot afford to maintain. That is why so many of these children are on the streets, sleeping rough or in prostitution, with no links to go back to, as in most cases fostering has only been a short-term affair.

These children get the blame for many things that they are the victims of, not the perpetrators. Raising the pay to carers is not the answer, even though the lowest pay is about 30p an hour. There is the insecurity of fostering: you are self-employed, with no rights, no pension, no paid holidays – though some local authorities are now addressing the holiday question.

When will the powers that be realise that things are getting worse and worse? The victims will be the children. They cry out for stability and a home life.

HELENA F MORRIS
Wick, Hereford and Worcester

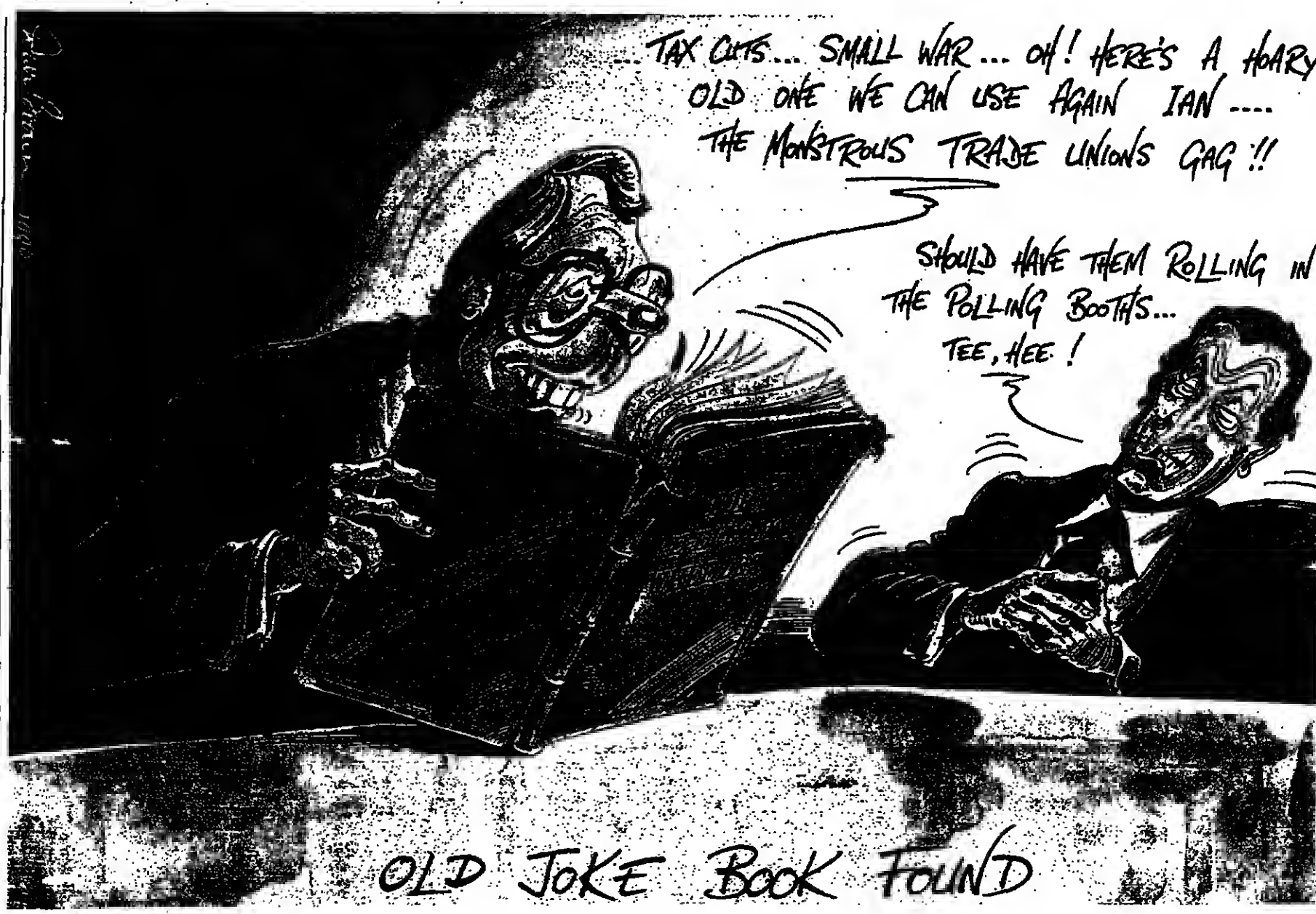
Sir: Kenneth Redgrave's letter on the child victims of failed foster care struck many chords. Foster care and residential care have indeed been seen as competitors, whereas the National Foster Care Association has always maintained that informed choices should be made for children following proper assessment of their needs. This assessment could be carried out while the child is living at home or in a short-term foster or residential setting, depending on individual circumstances.

We too believe that the time is right for a reappraisal of the services that are offered to children who come into the care of local authorities – and in particular a fresh look should be taken at how those who work with the children are helped and supported.

The majority of children being cared for are still placed with volunteers. Most do a wonderful job, sticking with children no matter what. But if a child-centred service is what is needed, it will necessarily make greater demands of carers: in these circumstances, can they continue to be wholly voluntary?

Isn't it time that we were in a position to require carers not to give up on placements, for the sake of the children? If that is the case, what rewards should they be offered?

We also believe that it is time to



look at the role of social workers and family placement workers, to see how they can provide children with a better service. If a child is placed in foster care, one way to help avoid placement breakdown is to give the placement worker responsibility for ensuring that carers are providing a quality service.

Any assessment and improvement of services for children will require adequate resourcing. Without a commitment from central government, the local authorities charged with providing these services will be unable to address what are clearly pressing needs.

PAT VERITY
National Foster Care Association
London SE1

Sir, On the one hand Kenneth Redgrave asserts that insufficient funding and training are responsible for the parlous state of child care by social service departments. But on the other he seems to blame those departments for that state of affairs.

A few years ago the social work profession wanted a three-year basic training, the Qualifying Diploma in Social Work. The Government said that was too expensive and opted for the two-year Diploma in Social Work, which we all agree is a basic qualification only. Further, it is the Government that restricts local authority spending by the standard spending assessment and capping for those who exceed it.

Mr Redgrave refers to the "careful planning and assessment which used to be available". In the present system a social worker can do all the assessment possible but at the end has to accept whatever is available, very often something

entirely unsuitable. A full inquiry certainly, but let us not start by blaming the social workers who "admit" – as though they are guilty of something – that their specialist training is defective. Very often the recently qualified are the only ones available.

ROBERT CAMERON
Romsey, Hampshire

Wild talk from Jewish leader

Sir: Mr Netanyahu, the Israeli Prime Minister, describes the assimilation of Jews into the wider community as a "silent Holocaust" ("US Jews fear Israel is casting them adrift", 16 November). This is not the first time such a comparison has been made.

Before its currency becomes general, even in a small circle of Jewry, the horrific implications of such a remark should be made clear. For a child of mixed marriage (my father was Jewish), it is implied that my life and those of my children are so worthless that they may as well have been disposed of by state violence.

My cousins, who were murdered by the Nazis on account of being Jewish, must have their suffering likened to the life of a Gentile raised in peace and prosperity. It is ironic that this supreme insult to the victims of the Holocaust should come from a man who claims to be a Jewish leader.

ROWLAND NELKEN
Colston Bassett, Nottinghamshire

Snags of Hansard voting system

Sir: While it is true, as stated by Miles Hudson (letter, 18 November), that the additional MPs selected under the Hansard Report system would not be placed nominated by their political parties, there are other consequential problems.

The intention is that they should serve their party's voters regionally or nationally. However, they will be their party's best loser in a single-member constituency and will clearly have a particular interest in cultivating the voters of that constituency.

It was the high percentage vote in that constituency which helped elect them. Some constituencies might find themselves with three MPs if a minor party candidate polled well there.

There are already reports that the additional members in New Zealand are taking a much closer interest in the single-member constituencies where they stood but were defeated, even though the allocation is not done on the basis of best losers, but by a national list.

In any case the additional member system does not correct the other defects of the single-member system.

If the voters are to have a choice of candidate within the party of their choice, be it according to age, gender, left wing, right wing, ethnicity or religious confession and the power to replace

incumbent members of their party found wanting, it is necessary to elect more than one MP to represent a constituency, as noted in your leader of the 11 November.

E.M. SYDDIQUE
Chief Executive
Electoral Reform Society
London SE1

Parliament needs business people

Sir: There is of course a third way of looking at Steve Norris's appointment as head of the lorry-owners' trade association (leader, 18 November).

Before entering Parliament, Mr Norris was a successful businessman working within the transport sector.

On leaving Parliament he is to return to that world. In the interim he brought considerable expertise and understanding to a key brief, that of transport minister with responsibility for London, and at a fraction of the salary he would have earned outside.

To describe such a career path as "irresponsible" sends a clear message to the few business people of real talent to enter politics. If you have an area of real understanding, make sure you do not accept a ministerial post through which you could make that understanding available for the benefit of the country.

You will be vilified for, and

maybe even prevented from, returning to that field after your years of public service.

The scandal is not what Mr Norris does next: it is that our political system could not keep the likes of him, Tim Eggar and others, in government. Attitudes such as yours can only underline the question that many of true talent must ask themselves when considering entering, or remaining in, politics: why bother?

MALCOLM C GRIMSTON
London SW17

Cooking lobsters without torture

Sir: Annie Bell's article (Magazine, 16 November) on ways of dispatching live lobsters rightly condemns the barbaric practice of plunging them into boiling water. Among the few alternative methods she considered there was no mention of the one advocated by Philip Harben (*The Grammar of Cookery*, 1965).

"By immersing a live shellfish in water at cooking temperature you kill it and cook it in one operation. But... to plunge a lobster or a crab, living, into boiling water is to torture it. Crabs shed claws (a sure sign of terror in the crab) and lobsters scuttle desperately up the side of the pot."

"This is the way to do it. Pour mildly tepid water – not cold or hot – over the live fish. This stuns it. Bring the water rapidly towards the boil, and the lobster will die before recovering consciousness – not a flicker of a whisker."

ROGER MAYLOR
Sunderland

No nightmares on my farm

Sir: The subtitle to your article "Man and beast" by Danny Penman (18 November) stated that "broken legs, cannibalism, heavy usage of drugs and constant agony is life for the average British farm animal".

I am a modern average British farmer on a modern average British farm; I keep average farm animals and could not recognise this nightmare that Dr Penman would have us believe is life for the average British farm animal.

The writer ignores the Farm Assurance Livestock Schemes, which are now an important part of modern British stock-keeping. Their primary aim is stock welfare through all stages from farm to butcher. Britain is leading the world in its welfare schemes and laws.

Dr Penman's insinuation that one quarter of British cattle are fed illegal drugs is nonsense. Feed ingredients have to be declared by law. If he has proof to the contrary he should prosecute, with our blessing.

He also fails to realise that the death of so many lambs at lambing time is due to nature – not any mortal's fault but a rather nasty fact of life and death on a farm. Would he rather the farmer played God and changed the weather?

Animal welfare is a very serious matter. Average British farmers take the lives of their animals very seriously. They have to. Their livelihoods depend on it. Dr Penman should visit an upland stock farm; he might be agreeably surprised by what he finds.

ROBERT CARR
Melrose, Roxburghshire

Rind robins

Sir: With reference to your conundrum about bacon rind for birds (letter, 15 November), most birds common to the British garden are unaccustomed to consuming animal fat. The salt in bacon is in a concentration unlikely to be consumed naturally by, for example, a sparrow or tit.

However, bacon rind has been discovered in the oasts of some birds, where it has also had the benefit of transferring grease to the plumage of young birds, thus affording valuable waterproofing.

NATHAN SMEDLEY
Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire

Music of menace

Sir: I was puzzled by the reference in the article on the demise of *Mastermind* (15 November) to the type of tension which the "sinister" title music was apparently intended to create. This is described as the "tension of a Nazi war camp".

There are many types of tension on offer, and I cannot think why the one referred to should be the one that was supposed to spring to mind. I defy any viewer to write in claiming that the music ever made them think of the Nazis.

Professor DAVID HEAD
Department of Modern Languages
University of Northumbria at Newcastle

In uniform at 14

Sir: With regard to youthful enlistment in war (letters, 13 and 16 November), a friend of mine ran away from school and celebrated his 15th birthday as an infantryman in Salonika in 1917. At that stage of the war, recruiting sergeants were not particular: "If you were warm, you were in."

KENYON ALEXANDER
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Post letters to Letters to the Editor, and include a daytime telephone number.
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essay

"A and this also," said Marlow suddenly, "has been one of the dark places of the earth."

Thus, on the River Thames, begins a story that is one of the most compelling and influential works of English literature in the last century: Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. It is the story of Marlow's journey through the jungles of the Belgian Congo to find the mysterious Kurtz, a colonial figure of mythic status who has gone mad, acquiring power and influence over the natives while losing his own mind in the process. It is an account of the descent of a Westerner into savagery as he encounters Africa, of a man who has lost his moral bearings deep in the jungle.

A tale of colonial adventure in what is now Zaire has obvious relevance as foreign forces prepare to arrive in that benighted country to deliver humanitarian assistance. But it is not quite the message that a casual reading of the story would give us, the reading that is pressed upon us by those who see in central Africa's problems merely humanity gone mad. A message is being sent when the phrase "heart of darkness" is casually banded around: that Africa is irreducibly ally banded around: a place where light and civilisation (a Western preserve) can never penetrate. Conrad's work, and the casual use of its title to refer to bloodshed and war, has become an icon of Western attitudes towards the Third World, and Africa in particular, a supporting argument from art for the thesis that parts of the Third World are mad, bad and dangerous to know, and irretrievably so.

But it is not so; and a careful look at Conrad, and the background to his novel, reveals far more than casual racism or the careless perpetration of stereotypes. As Conrad knew, when we stare into the darkness we are looking into our own hearts.

The story was first printed in *Blackwoods Magazine* (a dark irony itself, the title of the publication). It is about the hypocrisy inherent in colonialism, and the violence it begets. Marlow, a sea-captain, is given the mission in the first place because his predecessor has been killed after he savagely attacked an African chief in an argument over two hens. "He had been a couple of years already out there engaged in the noble cause, you know, and he probably felt the need at last of asserting his self-respect in some way," comments Marlow, laconically.

He is told that Kurtz is a prodigy, "an emissary of pity, and science, and progress, and devil knows what else." Kurtz has written an eloquent report for the International Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs. Yet this is also a man who can say: "Exterminate all the Brutes!" And when he finds him, Kurtz is gone, dying, his soul already lost: "The wilderness had found him out early." He is no longer the mythic figure that Marlow has sought, just a sad and broken man dying from fever.

Conrad's story is about the clash between the colonial ideal, the *mission civilisatrice*, and the reality: enslavement, murder, plunder and disaster. The subject is colonial hypocrisy, not African madness. He locates it in Africa, and in the Congo, I suspect, both because he had been there and because Congo was not British. It was Belgian. Conrad (Polish by birth) apparently did not wish to antagonise his British readers. For the book is at least partly about Britain, and British colonialism (Kurtz is half-English, half-French). Conrad softened his message, but it is always there, nudging gently at our conscience.

He starts his book on the misty Thames just down the river from *The Independent's* office, not on the Congo; and this strain runs throughout the book, seeping through in references to the Romans in Britain, to Drake (the subject of a critical article in *Blackwoods*), and to Sir John Franklin (whose expedition to the North-West Passage ended in disaster, and in cannibalism).

At the centre of Conrad's book is the appalling spiritual contradiction faced by those who left Europe for Empire, taking with them the belief that



wrecked by industrialisation, and dared to pose the question: "As there is a darkest Africa, is there not also a darkest England?" Britain was about to plunge into the Boer War, where concentration camps were pioneered. Within 20 years, the whole of Europe was to be plunged into a savage and bloody war to rival anything the world had ever seen, barbed wire running from Belgium to Switzerland, poison gas drifting across the plains of northern France, the corpses piled up across the continent.

All of this is just below the surface as Marlow finishes his traveller's tale, and the boat drifts on the Thames. "The offering was barred by a black bank of clouds," the narrator says, "and the tranquil waterway leading to the uttermost ends of the earth bowed and overcast sky seemed to lead into the heart of an immense darkness."

they were going to do good. Nowhere was this belief more prevalent than among the Britons who set out for Africa, India or Asia. Yet the idealism was inevitably contradicted by the brutality that they could not bear to countenance. Faced with their own descent into violence, they often took refuge in a belief that this was, somehow, not happening, or that they had no choice in the matter. The men of empire, writes Kathryn Tidrick in her book *Empire and the English Character*, were forced into this denial of violence "not only because they had moral reservations about physical coercion but because they believed that they were blessed with attributes of character which enabled them to prevail without it." Out of this psychological contradiction, and its unsustainability, comes Kurtz's madness. Tidrick's book is full of good men who found this hypocrisy hard to bear, and who were led as a result to brutality, madness, or both.

Certainly, Conrad did not have far to look to find examples. He draws heavily upon the career of the journalist Henry Morton Stanley, author of *In Darkest Africa*, for whom the search for a story led to exploration, and then to involvement in the events he described. After his famous meeting with Livingstone, Stanley moved on to the service of the Belgian King Leopold, who ran Congo as his personal fief under the cover of the International Association for the Exploration and Civilisation of Africa. Stanley was widely regarded in Britain as a freebooter and a thug. "He has no concern with justice, no right to administer it; he comes with no sanction, no authority, no jurisdiction - nothing but explosive bullets and a copy of *The Daily Telegraph*," wrote *The Saturday Review*.

There are obvious modern parallels. Francis Ford Coppola's sprawling film masterpiece, *Apocalypse Now*, is based on Conrad's novel. It expresses the yawning gap between the ideals behind American intervention in Vietnam and the reality, and the inability of either Marlow (now a young Special Forces captain) or Kurtz (a colonel in the Green Berets) to bridge that gap. This is a war where, as Kurtz puts it, young men may drop fire on people from their helicopters, but they cannot write the word "Fuck" on their helmets; where, as Marlow puts it, soldiers can cut

someone in half with a machine gun and then give them a Band-Aid. But if Coppola associated Vietnam with Conrad, it is not hard to think of other areas of the world where the "international community" has intervened, only to find itself condemning, or even supporting, brutality. Think of the Dutch marines, tasked to defend the people of Srebrenica in Bosnia, but in effect allowing the town to fall to Serbs who would massacre thousands. Think of the Canadian paratroopers in Somalia, torturing two of the people they had been sent to feed.

If, when we look at the tragedy in Zaire, we simply see a caricature of tribal clashes and jungle savagery, then we see false. The roots of today's struggles, deaths and disasters in central Africa lie in the deadly encounter of Europe with Africa. It was Belgium and France that created the state structures of Zaire, Burundi and Rwanda; emphasised the "ethnic" differences that now fuel genocide; drew the boundaries; and decided who would rule whom. In Zaire, it is not just the Hutu militias from Rwanda that bear the blame for the crisis: it is the Western-dominated UN Security Council, for ignoring them until it was (almost) too late; and it is those who armed and supplied the forces on the ground (which appears to have been almost everyone). And in Zaire, crumbling rapidly now that the regime of Mobutu Sese Seko is all but over, who was it that provided the cash to prop up a corrupt regime? Who supplies the weapons to the rebels who seek to overthrow it? Who flies the transport planes, sells the rifles, feeds the constant wars for resources and influence throughout Africa? Is it any surprise that the French are seen as far from neutral, with their history of involvement in the Hutu-Tutsi antagonism, or the British suspect, with their background in the area?

The darkness that Conrad saw was not in Africa; it was in the hearts of the colonialists themselves, those men who travelled from far away with their high hopes and saw them fade into their worst fears. Nor was it just colonialism; there is a *fin de siècle* pessimism, a sense of doubt about Europe itself and its "civilised" values that pervades the book. This, too, is bound to strike a chord with us as we head towards the end of our bloody century.

Conrad was writing at the end of the 19th century, when the ideas of progress, faith in science, and rationality were ebbing. A few years before, William Booth, founding the Salvation Army, had seen the human destruction.

Heart of prejudice

No one better described the encounter with Africa of European adventurers, explorers and colonialists than Joseph Conrad. Andrew Marshall shows how he unveiled the attitudes that still blind us to the realities of Rwanda and Zaire

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Answers please, to mysteries of our time



Miles Kingston

Today we present Ten Great Mysteries of Our Time!

1. We all know, because we have been told so many times, that the future of communications is going to fall into the hands of one man.

The mystery is: why can nobody make up their minds whether it is going to be Rupert Murdoch or Bill Gates?

2. If shooting is such an integral part of sport, the mys-

tery is why combat knife fighting isn't an Olympic event as well.

3. As things stand at the moment, the number of children who are shot every year, by madmen or normal people, is very small. A dozen or so. Perhaps two dozen in a Dunblane year.

The number of children run over and killed by cars and lorries every year is very large, running to hundreds, even thousands.

There is great pressure to get guns banned, in order to prevent them falling into the hands of another madman, who might create another Dunblane.

There is no pressure at all to get cars banned, even though they are well known to cause much higher levels of death to children, and even though a car is a much more effective weapon of death than a gun.

It is sometimes said that a car in the hands of a madman cannot do as much damage as a gun in the hands of a madman. This is true. It is not the problem, however. What worries people is not the damage

a car driven by a madman can do. It is the damage which a car driven by a normal person can do. Many more children are run over by normal citizens than are shot (or run over) by madmen.

But nobody tries to ban cars.

Or control normal citizens.

Why not?

It's a mystery.

4. Now that Chile and South Africa have spent their season in the limelight as the newly fashionable wine-producing country, in the wake of Bulgaria, Australia, New Zealand, etc, etc, there any wine-producing country left which hasn't had its hour of discovery and triumph?

5. Once every five years politicians have to take notice of what the public thinks, because at a general election the public can pass judgement on them. This is hard for politicians, because as a general rule they despise the public and do not respect what they think, even though they say the opposite. They say: "The man in the street is no fool", even though they privately think that the man in

the street is an idiot. As the election comes closer, the party in power prepares little tax cuts and little sweeteners for the electorate in the belief that the public is fool enough to forget the last few years of misrule and vote them back in again.

The mystery, however, is not whether the public actually is an ass or not.

The mystery is why on earth politicians want to be voted back in again.

6. Never have two jolly people laughed so much as Jennifer Paterson and Clarissa Dickson Wright in *Two Fat Ladies*.

But what were they laughing at?

7. When the National Lottery first appeared, a statistician said, of the chances of winning, that if a casino offered the same odds, it would be closed down.

The mystery is: why do people buy lottery tickets?

8. We are often told that women are afraid to go out by themselves late at night in cities, because it is dangerous, because they might be attacked by men. Women are

therefore warned not to go out by themselves late at night in cities.

But women are not causing any trouble.

It is men who are causing trouble.

The mystery is: Why is it not men who are banned from going out late at night in cities?

9. A red-faced BBC is still worrying why *Rhodes* seems to have been such a total turn-off for the audience, even though all that money was spent on it, and they even got that sex chap from *Drop The Donkey* to star in it.

Has it occurred to them that when 90 per cent of the audience switch on a programme called *Rhodes*, they are going to expect to see a young chef showing them how to cook, and will switch off again when he's not there?

10. Who, over the age of 15, actually looks forward to Christmas?

If anyone knows the answer to any of these, or to the mystery of whether Greg Frock is related to Marie Frock, please get in touch, though not necessarily with me.

It's going to be close, and only you know how close

I would have ooticed: the Cabinet minister who preceded me out of the restaurant had oot slipped a tennor to the waiter. But the waiter swivelled as the Tory left and hissed, "Good luck to you oo Thursday - whichever Thursday it is".



Andrew Marr

Forget polls. The election will be decided by ambiguous, confused, even ashamed voters

The problem, of course, is that conventional wisdom is so often foolish: that what liberal-minded Britain considers irrefutable has been so often refuted, and that the City and my profession are such bad futurologists.

Perhaps there is too much hidden superstition in my argument. But there it is. The feeling lurches. Can it be justified at all? Evidence of Labour invincibility is based, of course, on the polls, which have shown a huge and consistent Opposition lead. This is the scientific age. Polling is practised with scientific seriousness. Pollsters gather in conferences, exchange information and discuss techniques. Often, they have been remarkably accurate. Their authority comes from their record, which was dented in 1992 but not demolished.

Yet polling is not science. It is asking questions and hoping for truthful answers. In the past, some of these answers haven't been - that is more or less common ground.

We believe that an unknown proportion of Tory voters lied to pollsters about their intentions. We strongly suspect that among those who refused to answer there were more Conservatives. We know that some recent polls overstate the anti-Tory vote: one highly-publicised one included another question about how people voted in 1992, which demonstrated pretty conclusively that Neil Kinnock won and has therefore presumably been in power for years. (It's just that nobody's noticed yet.)

My point is only that if people both dislike the Conservatives and also suspect that they may vote for them, noses pinched, to preserve a modest but long-established recovery, that behaviour would be peculiarly difficult for pollsters to tease out. This is not a frank country. These voters will feel ambiguous, perhaps confused, even ashamed. And if they haven't quite confessed to the bathroom mirror, they are unlikely to tell a pollster.

Though he didn't discuss the polls, this is essentially what my lunatic guest thought was happening. He summed up the general mood

as general fed-upness with his party, combined with a sneaking, half-resentful acknowledgement that things were getting better, and the Government might be partly responsible. I suggest that quite a few people feel that way.

Then there is "agenda slide", a new term which describes the difference between what the political classes are interested in - sleaze, constitutional questions, Brussels, intra-party divisions, hairstyles - and what the rest of the country cares most about - prosperity, safety, the environment and so on. The political agenda connects with the popular one via the media. At times they can seem virtually identical: sleaze dominates the headlines; Tory popularity sinks further. Ergo - the whole country thinks alike.

Except - or - it doesn't. However angry voters are about those headlines, they may regard them as only semi-serious - Westminster as farce - and actually vote on the basis of a subtly different agenda. If so, the more froth and turmoil in the papers about politics, the harder pollsters will have to search for slowly hardening convictions based on another, almost subliminal agenda.

These are, granted, impressions, not hard facts. But for me, they add up to a conviction that the election remains a closer call than many assume. It is the economy, stupid. But it is also politics, stupid. The choice is big. The game is wide open, and the rougher, hungrier set of politicians will win.

For the Tories, that means rediscovering discipline, and hiding their deep splits, while grabbing as much credit as possible for the recovery and painting Labour, in traditional fashion, as profligate and anti-patriotic federalists. If middle England, in particular, is feeling a touch more secure and prosperous, then even Blair could be made to seem a risk. These are genuinely conservative folk.

For Labour, it also, unavoidably, means the politics of fear - attacking the Conservatives as a party that now wants, in its heart, to leave Europe altogether (note how the word "renegade" has become a suddenly fashionable battery for the right).

It also means a far more aggressive approach to the social agenda and political reform than we have heard yet; Blair needs some raw roughhouse politics to help him escape from the Cassandra-style, blithering and trivia of recent weeks. If it isn't time for a real change, it won't be time to vote the Government out.

I still think Labour's job the easier one and in the end, if they fight hard, that they are likelier to win. But this is a secretive, private nation. And in the past few weeks, there seems to me to have been a change in the mood, a sort of tremor in the air before the weather changes. In politics as elsewhere, it looks like a long and changeable winter.

If crime is a disease then this is the cure

On a visit to the erudite research department of the Home Office, I asked them the only question that matters: what works to stop crime? Is it prison? Well, yes, up to a point, they said. (This is the Home Office, after all.) If you increase the prison population by 25 per cent, you do get a 1 per cent drop in crime. But that is ruinously expensive, so I asked what else might work. Nursery schools, they said - and pushed a piece of research across the table to me.

This research has been knocking around for years. Everywhere you go, at education and crime conferences, you will hear it quoted. It knocks the breath out of people who have never seen it before. It knocks the socks off most other causes-of-crime research because it is such a thorough piece of sociology.

The HighScope Perry Preschool Study took a group of three- and four-year-olds from the poorest, most crime- and drug-ridden neighbourhoods in Michigan. It divided them in two. One lot got two years' intensive nursery education, the other didn't. Researchers then tracked all of the original group through the rest of their lives. (They are now nearly 40.) The difference between those who had the two years' special nursery education and the group that didn't is phenomenal.

The project started in 1962 in Ypsilanti, Michigan. The latest check when the group was 37 found these results: the HighScope children have half as many criminal arrests as the control group; they earn far more; nearly three times more own their own homes, marry and stay married longer; 20 per cent fewer have ever been on social security. They will be traced and monitored again when they reach 40 - if the project's founder, David Weikart, can raise the funds, because all along he has struggled to get the money to keep monitoring these children. Everyone likes the results, no one wants to pay. What's new? Sociology is a pitifully poor relation of, say, health research and yet we want to know as many social answers.

David Weikart was in London this week visiting a British version of the HighScope project, largely funded by Barnados and National Children's Homes, who use the methods for their nursery schemes in deprived areas. Of course we are suspicious of American gurus peddling magic systems. But Weikart is a modest and



A nursery programme in a deprived area in the US demonstrates how to keep adults out of jail. Polly Toynbee talks to its founder

moderate man who eschews jargon. An educational psychologist by training, he devised the HighScope approach for children who have had too little attention at home. He says his method makes little long-term, measurable difference to children with good parents. Starting from the premise that these children come from chaotic, unpredictable households, HighScope teaches them how to think, analyse and structure their time - "Plan, Do, Review". Weikart is fighting a rear-guard action against the current reactionary fashion for more Chalk and Talk, more Sit Up and Shut Up teaching. What they learn hardly matters at all, he says. It does not last

and it makes little impact on their future. Learning to think about what they are doing is what makes the difference to the rest of their lives.

Weikart's studies show that children who have a heavily academic nursery education emphasising the three Rs do far less well in the long run than those who have been taught ways of thinking rather than content. (Though any nursery schooling helps.) The trick is to make each child plan, think about and describe each activity they choose to do. The success of the scheme also depends on bringing parents into the project, with at least 20 home visits a year.

Weikart is scathing about the

importance of IQ tests. HighScope improves the children's IQ score by some 25 points, as they enter primary school. But by the age of 10, the HighScopers and those with no nursery education all have the same average scores. Yet the HighScopers go on to do spectacularly better. Whatever IQ is, he does not find it a useful predictor of the qualities needed for social stability in later life.

So for several decades we have had these results to mull over. What effect has it had? Weikart smiles wryly. Intensive nursery education is still only patchily provided. "But Michigan is building two new prisons every year instead, and has plans to keep building them

indefinitely." Prison building is eating up all other budgets progressively, as it will in Britain, even though every dollar spent on HighScope children saved \$7 later in their lives on crime and welfare. In Michigan, which funded the initial programme, 3,000 children are in HighScope when, he estimates, some 25,000 severely deprived children a year are in need of it.

Governments have no idea of economic planning when it comes to social projects, Weikart says. "If a company wants to build a new hotel, they don't wait until they have saved that money. They go out and borrow it, knowing they will make profits to pay the money back. The same is true of nurseries and other preventative schemes. Borrow to invest now and reap the profits later. But they refuse to think that way."

Social problems are never treated like health problems. If some new medical cure arrives, even at great expense for a small number of sufferers, the NHS gives in to the clamour to provide it. But when the solution is not medical but social, the policy-makers simply ignore it. That is partly because there is rarely anything like the same social evidence extensively gathered to bolster arguments for new medical treatments. Most good social schemes only just manage to scrape together funds for the project itself, living hand to mouth from year to year, with no extra money for long-term monitoring of results.

But if we were to redefine crime as a disease, we would think about it in a more constructive, problem-solving way. Imagine if mighty Royal Colleges with highly paid and distinguished consultants were in charge of curing various social sicknesses. Imagine a whole great establishment devoted to rooting out the causes of crime, researching the epidemiology and the cost effectiveness of various treatments with all the grandeur, status and funding we give physical illness - then we might make some progress.

Since people are as worried about crime as they are about health, a gigantic crime-hunting social package should be Labour's priority for its manifesto. And the Tories, too, for that matter. Politicians have made nursery pledges in the past but not focusing on the need for expensive, intensive programmes for those children who are most likely to cost society dear in the future. But to do that would take borrowing or taxing now to invest wisely for long-term savings.

Life's no joke in the lawyers' chamber of horrors

What do you call 1,000 lawyers at the bottom of the ocean? A good start. What's the difference between a dead lawyer on the road and a dead rat? The dead rat has skid marks in front of it. Why can lawyers swim in shark-infested waters without danger of being eaten? Professional courtesy.

And so the jokes go on and on. The legal profession has spawned a comedy industry. There are 70,000 pages of this poisonous wit on the Internet, all marks of public contempt for m'learned friends. And how they're hurting. Yesterday, Barbara Mills, Director of Public Prosecutions, faced with accusations that the solicitors she employs are miserable, offered an intriguing insight into more general trouble in chambers. Her retort amounted to a claim that since most lawyers are miserable, we shouldn't be too surprised if a few in her own legal corner, the Crown Prosecution Service, are also off colour. Some 80 per cent of solicitors in private practice are looking for a new job, Ms Mills told Radio 4's *Today* programme.

A nation choked on its muck. How can it be that a profession apparently living on blank cheques can be in the doldrums? We never realised that the hedgewed were so unhappy and such sensitive beings. (Why is it that many lawyers have broken noses? From chasing parked ambulances.) Have we, perhaps, been going a bit too far with the acid humour?

Apparently so, according to *The Lawyer*, a weekly newspaper, which polled its readers in the summer and found that 63 per cent of the respondents thought lawyers had a negative public image. Nearly nine out of 10 thought the profession was less respected than 20 years ago.

How is it that lawyers have come to be regarded as low life, sunk, as they are, down there with journalists and politicians in the public's esteem? "It's mainly the fees. There is a really negative feelings about paying lawyers that doctors, for example, don't get," said one lawyer yesterday. "When you win or even if you lose, the client seems happy to pay. But as the months



M'learned friends are miserable, despite their fat fees. Jack O'Sullivan and Elizabeth Wine find out why

go by, and the bills arrive, you get this negative feeling from them." Such attitudes are not surprising to those of us who have to pay up. (What can a goose do, a duck can't, and a lawyer should? Stick his bill up his ass.) Most lawyers will admit to other weaknesses. Some will concede, at least privately, that they are boring. "My mother says it's the nature of the training," confessed one solicitor. "When I'm telling a story, I give a dry, crusty resume because I spend my day reducing vast amounts of material to a few salient facts. Whereas a normal person will tell you, 'She said this, and then he said that, and then she did this and so on.' Though these accounts are often inaccurate and no more infor-

mative than mine, they're much more entertaining." And then he explained the problem of confidentiality. "Lawyers can't talk about what they do in the office during the day. So unless I'm a terribly interesting chap, what the hell do I have to talk about? Add to that the fact that a lot of lawyers are phenomenally pompous and we've got a problem."

But the current state of depression apparently sweeping the Inns of Court and solicitors' offices across the country doesn't spring simply from public unpopularity. After all, lawyers, though respectable, have never been loved. When Dick discusses a replacement for the King in Shakespeare's *Henry VI, Part II*, he declares his pri-

ority: "The first thing we do, let's kill all the lawyers." Many lawyers are fed up because the good old days of job security are over. "It used to be the case that if you had a law degree, especially one from Oxford or Cambridge, then doors opened," said one lawyer. "You were sure of a job. But in recent years, we have felt, for the first time, the chill of recession." In the early Nineties lawyers experienced unemployment, and though business has recovered, those used to privilege are still in shock.

"Law is so much more competitive these days," said another. "We are being asked to market ourselves more aggressively. In the past, business

clients would stay with you for years unless something terrible went wrong. Now they are shopping around ruthlessly. They might have close relationships with three or four legal firms and play one off against the other. In the old days, clients would have been scared to ask at the beginning for a quote. And they certainly wouldn't go off to another firm for another estimate and return to tell you they had a lower quote. All that's changed."

"We're given billing targets. Firms expect you to produce a minimum number of billable hours work a day - maybe three or four in easy-going firms or six in the toughest outfits. You have to be great at glad-handing clients."

"Younger lawyers are dissatisfied. It's harder to get a partnership. And people are wondering whether partnership is worth the trouble, because of the responsibility. There is also the financial risk - some firms have gone bankrupt. And many of those who are ready to wait for partnership are frustrated with the managements of firms, which they can see don't have the managerial, marketing or PR skills that are needed in this more competitive environment."

All very sad. But many will recognise this as a snapshot of just about any professional group over the past decade, struggling to adjust from cosy security to a risky and harder working life, with some gaining great financial reward, others facing sudden failure.

If the jokes are anything to go by, the public will have little sympathy. (How do you get a lawyer out of a tree? Cut the rope.) Nor will the concerns of m'learned friends gain much credibility. (How can you tell a lawyer is lying? His lips are moving.) The most likely outcome is that lawyers, like teachers and doctors, will get used to the harsher new world. And most recognise that it's wise to suffer in silence. "No one will tell you on the record that he'd like a different job," one lawyer said yesterday. "Clients would say, 'I'm paying him £200 an hour and he's saying he doesn't want to be a lawyer.'"

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Bonuses soar to £315m in securities trading firms despite danger signals on rising costs

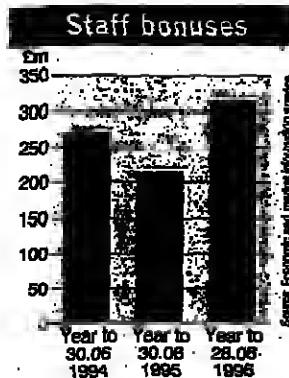
Peter Rodgers
Financial Editor

Bonuses paid by Stock Exchange member firms to employees soared by almost £100m to a record £315m in the year to June, as a booming stock market lined the pockets of market-makers and brokers.

Stock Exchange figures released yesterday, covering 250 member firms, confirmed widespread reports of huge rewards throughout the City as business volumes and profitability shot up.

Profits made by the Exchange's members more than quadrupled compared with the previous 12 months to £719m before tax – a rise of 334 per cent – with a record £338m in the first quarter of 1996.

The figures give a rare insight into the financial industry's bonuses and profit-sharing since most of the rest of the City does not compile similar data. But many other City businesses have been sharing this year in payouts that are back to



the levels of the 1980s boom years and are probably comparable with those in the securities market.

In the year to June, bonuses and profit-sharing in Stock Exchange firms averaged 22 per cent of staff costs, but hit a record of 30 per cent in the second quarter of this year compared with the long-term average of 17 per cent.

The gravy train is known to have reached fund managers,

corporate financiers, foreign exchange dealers and even senior backroom staff, who are much sought after, and are often now on similar compensation packages to those awarded to the high profile dealers in the front office.

There have been regular disclosures over the last year of multi-million pound earnings packages awarded to City staff, dwarfing most of the so-called fat cats in industry.

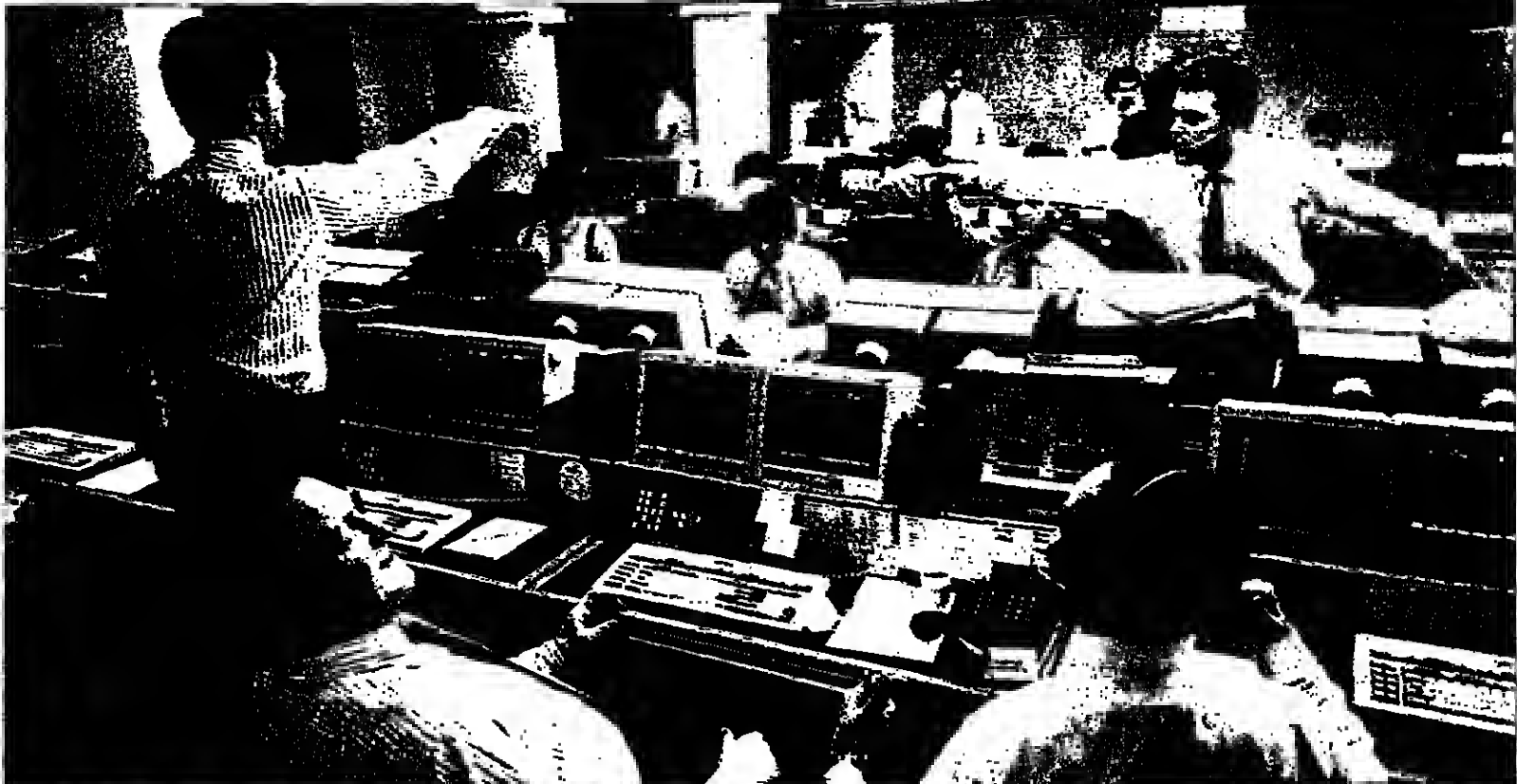
This has been fuelled by a merry-go-round of staff changes, with firms such as Deutsche Morgan Grenfell offering to guarantee bonuses to entice new staff to their expanding operations.

As a result of the payouts, staff costs are rising far faster than any other costs, with bonuses and profit-sharing representing the biggest part of the increase and creaming off a substantial part of the rising profits.

What the Exchange called the "vibrant" market of 1995-96 contrasted with the previous year when there was a £308m decline in pre-tax profits.

The 46 per cent increase in bonuses and profit share to £315m in the year to this June compares with a decline of 21 per cent in the year to June 1995, when the total paid out was £216m.

But although profits have soared, the Exchange report showed that the return on capital made by firms in the stock market was surprisingly poor, and firms have been withdrawing capital from the industry de-



Champagne time in the City: Profits made by members of the London Stock Exchange almost quadrupled to £719m

spite the bonanza of the last year. The first half of 1996 saw the first significant fall in capital employed, which the Exchange blamed on restructuring in the industry and the impact of the European Capital Adequacy Directive.

The report said: "Although the absolute financial perfor-

mance of member firms has been impressive, it is clearly less so when compared to the amount of capital they employ."

The long-term average return on capital is only 6 per cent, and "despite recent favourable conditions, the modest return over the past year would be lower still

if firms had not reduced the amount of capital employed."

Other costs, such as running buildings and services and charges made between companies, have fallen, showing that the performance of Exchange businesses is being driven more than ever by the rewards for staff. Overall staff costs in-

cluding salaries and bonuses have been under better control, with a 9 per cent increase.

The Exchange report on member firms' financial performance said that the bonus and profit-sharing levels reflected the "benign market conditions", the entry of new firms and restructuring through mergers and

acquisitions of existing firms. With 70 per cent of staff costs fixed, and with staff representing the largest single element of costs, revenue is highly sensitive to dealing profit which recorded a "spectacular" growth of 59 per cent, more than twice the 28 per cent growth in fees.

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Customs ordered to repay £35m VAT

Roger Trapp

The High Court yesterday delivered a blow to the Customs & Excise over its increasingly tough policy on value added tax collection by ruling that it had acted illegally in refusing to refund about £35m that had been paid in error.

The hard-hitting ruling was hailed by accountants as great news for the business community, which had been waging a campaign against the Government's attempts to reduce its exposure to large VAT refunds by imposing a time limit on claims. Most advisers accept the need for some limit and propose six years, in line with the period that applies to Customs officials investigating taxpayers' affairs.

However, though Customs is not expected to appeal against the judgment, it immediately made clear that the taxpayers' victory may be short-lived because it still intends to include

proposals to introduce a three-year cap in next week's Budget.

Though the organisations – including the mail-order companies GUS and Kay & Co and the drinks group Allied Domecq – will be entitled to immediate payment of the money, Customs indicated that it would seek to claw back the sum once the proposals become law, in about three weeks.

The case stems from a ruling by the VAT Tribunal earlier this month that – though Customs had imposed the cap in July – claims going back several years were valid because the cap had not yet been approved by Parliament. Since the tribunal could not direct Customs to pay back the money, taxpayers were urged to issue writs against the organisation.

However, the issue goes back much further, to a spate of cases earlier this year that raised the spectre of the Government having to pay billions of pounds

in VAT refunds to such businesses as retailers operating interest-free credit deals and operators of company car fleets.

The rulings came shortly after the revelation that the approximately £43m in VAT received by the Government in the financial year to the end of March 1996 was significantly less than had been expected.

In an attempt to give greater certainty to the Treasury's revenues, Customs & Excise announced in July that any business which discovered it had overpaid VAT could only go back three years rather than claim an unlimited refund, in some cases going back to the introduction of the tax in 1973.

Since then, Customs has been refusing refunds of amounts paid more than three years earlier because "it would waste business time and public resources if the department were to refund such money only to claw the money back."



Given a free hand: Gerry Robinson of Granada

Granada launches hotel sales

Matthew Horsman
Media Editor

Granada, the leisure and media conglomerate, yesterday launched the long-awaited disposal of its Exclusive Hotels, with the sale of the Hyde Park Hotel in London for £86m to Mandarin Oriental International, a unit of Singapore-based Jardine Matheson.

The sale, on the eve of its full-year results announcement today, marks the first step toward selling all 17 Exclusives, inher-

ited by Granada when it won its £3.9bn takeover of Forte early this year. The rest of the portfolio, which will be sold singly or in small units, is expected to generate £900m, which will be used to pay down Granada's £3.5bn debt.

But company insiders cautioned against expectations that the disposal programme would be accelerated. "We are looking to get the best prices we can, and will not be rushed," said one senior executive. The sale is expected to be completed by early

next year, and will see such landmarks as the Westbury and the Grosvenor House change hands, probably to a range of Far Eastern, European and US buyers.

The relatively leisurely pace of disposals was due, analysts said, to Granada's desire to get the highest prices it can at a time when several high-profile hotels and chains have been placed on the market. Moreover, the stock market has been unbothered by the company's high debt load, against a backdrop of low interest rates, and have given

Gerry Robinson, the chairman, plenty of leeway in tackling the disposals programme.

The Hyde Park, which will be renamed the Mandarin Oriental Hyde Park, boasts 185 rooms and had an operating profit in the year ending 31 January of £4.7m. Mandarin said yesterday that the acquisition would be earnings-enhancing by the end of next year.

The hotel disposal programme is expected to be followed by the acquisition of Yorkshire-Tyne Tees.

Takeover talk lifts London Electricity

Chris Godsmark
Business Correspondent

Takeover speculation engulfed London Electricity yesterday following reports that Entergy, the US utility, was preparing to mount a £1.2bn bid.

London is one of only five remaining regional power suppliers still independent out of 12 at the time of privatisation

six years ago. Two of the five, Northern and East Midlands, are already the subject of takeover bids.

The speculation boosted London's share price 28.5p to 665p as rumours about Entergy's intentions switched from Yorkshire Electricity. Shares in Yorkshire fell 7p to 739.5p while Southern Electric also dropped 4p to 702.5p.

Both London and Entergy refused to comment on the share price move. "All we can say is what we always say, that we comment on speculation a London spokeswoman said.

The reports from the US had claimed Entergy, based in New Orleans, had singled out an unnamed UK bid target which closely resembled London. The reports suggested a

formal offer would put a price tag of £7 on each share in the company.

Entergy has made no secret of its intention to make further investments in Britain. It already has a joint venture with BP to build a large gas-fired power station near Hull and has an office in central London. The group is known to have engaged merchant bankers Morgan Stanley.

With 2.2 million customers and revenues last year of \$6.5bn (£3.9bn) Entergy is one of the largest US utility firms. It has expanded overseas in recent years, investing across South America, in Hong Kong and Pakistan. It also paid more than \$1bn for the company which supplies electricity to customers in Melbourne, Australia.

'City fines should be big enough to hurt'

Peter Rodgers

A huge increase in fines for City cheats and the firms for which they work was proposed last night by Lord Runciman, deputy chairman of the Securities and Investments Board and former chairman of the Royal Commission on Criminal Justice.

He said fines should be big enough to hurt and "since some of the players are very big, some of the fines should be very big indeed."

The power to fine should be extended to include repayment of profits and restitution to the victims of abuse, as well as the

ability to apply to civil courts to fine outside offenders who are not within the regulators' remit.

Lord Runciman, in a speech to the Securities Institute in London, defined cheats as those who commit what are usually regarded as technical offences or lapses of judgement which were actually "calculated irresponsibility" and not as innocuous technical as they were made out.

Other types of cheating involved "deliberately uncorrected misinformation," and those who specialise in driving a coach and horses through loopholes and cutting corners. He made a distinction be-

tween cheats and crooks, who he said should be dealt with by the criminal law.

Lord Runciman said one of the flaws of the Financial Services Act was that the SIB, the lead regulator, had no power to fine, unlike the junior regulators that reported to it.

He demanded much greater use of "naming and shaming" as a punishment, by listing offenders publicly, and he said it was another anomaly that SIB found it hard to do this under the present legislation.

Lord Runciman called for tougher powers to expel cheats completely from the markets,

saying "some might say that banishment for life is a lot more serious than being condemned to a few months of watching television in a comfortable open prison before returning to a long and lucrative career in the same sector of business where the offence was committed."

Regulators should be given powers to prevent serious cheats from continuing to practice, whether or not they were authorised to carry out investment business under the act.

They should also have the power to pursue elusive but "potentially nefarious" characters

such as shadow directors, bullying shareholders, pseudo consultants and "even, perhaps, the manipulating spouse".

For certain types of misconduct, naming and shaming could deter offenders from risking a similar demolition of their reputations against potential offenders would also be deterred when they saw the unpleasant experiences of those whose reputations had been tarnished.

There was a final group of miscreants he called charlatans, who are not deliberately cheating but are not fit to be trusted with other peoples' money or to give investment advice.



Lord Runciman: Called for a rise in fines for City cheats

Exchange clamps down on leaks

Matthew Horsman

The Stock Exchange has revised to its rules on company directors, in the wake of last week's selected leak to the *Financial Times* about a reduced role for United News & Media's chairman, Lord Stevens.

According to the new regulation, entered under clause 16.7 of the official Listing Rules, companies "must notify the Company Announcements Office without delay (by the end of the business day following the decision) when... any important functions or executive responsibilities of a director are changed."

Had it been in effect, the rule change, revealed in the *Independent* last week, would have obliged United News & Media to issue a statement about Lord Stevens' move to a part-time role starting next spring, which will see cuts in both his salary and his expenses. The Stock Exchange said yesterday that the rule was officially in place, and would be carefully enforced.

Lord Stevens has taken a less active role in the management of United News & Media since the merger of the company with Lord Hollick's MAI earlier this year. But his salary, which stood at £510,000 a year at the time of the merger, has yet to be cut. A decision about his new

remuneration will be made by a board committee in due course, the company has said.

Lord Hollick, chief executive of the combined companies, is widely viewed as the prime architect of United's strategy, which saw the £592m acquisition of Blenheim, the exhibitions company, and the purchase of a stake in ITV company HTV.

United is expected to clinch the purchase of Westcountry Television this week, for a sum believed to be between £75m and £80m. The acquisition will be seen as a step towards creating a southern England and Wales ITV giant, taking in Westcountry, HTV and United's own ITV licences, Anglia and Meridian.

STOCK MARKETS					
Index	Close	Day's change	Change(%)	1996 High	1996 Low
FTSE 100	2978.10	+16.00	+0.4	4073.10	3532.30
FTSE 250	3400.30	+0.10	+0.0	4568.60	4015.30
FTSE 350	1980.20	+6.30	+0.3	2022.10	1816.60
FTSE SmallCap	2180.42	-3.11	-0.1	2244.36	1954.06
FTSE All-Share	1954.08	+5.51	+0.3	1994.54	1791.95
New York	8570.92	+23.11	+0.4	6376.72	5032.94
Tokyo	20956.18	+159.51	+0.8	22666.80	19734.70
Hong Kong	13056.93	+14.13	+0.1	13056.93	10204.87
Frankfurt	2764.09	+0.25	+0.0	2795.80	2253.36

Source: FT Information

INTEREST RATES					
Short sterling	UK medium gilt	US long bond	Money Market Rates	Bond Yields	
3 Months	1 Year	Medium Term	3 Months	1 Year	Long Term
5.06	5.94	7.49	5.06	5.94	7.49
5.34	5.66	8.17	5.34	5.66	8.17
0.50	0.63	2.57	0.50	0.63	2.57
3.13	3.28	5.80	3.13	3.28	5.80

CURRENCIES

Source: Federal Reserve Bank and IMF Statistical Department © 1985 McGraw-Hill

Pound

	Yesterday	Change	Year Ago
£/(\$)	1.6753	+0.30c	1.5590
£/(¥)	1.6750	+2.00c	1.5590
DM/(\$)	2.5177	+0.75c	2.1849
¥/(\$)	106.501	+10.322	150.007
£/DM	92.3	+0.3	82.7

Dollar

	Yesterday	Change	Year Ago
£/(\$)	0.5869	-0.32	0.6418
£/(¥)	0.5870	-0.72	0.6414
DM/(\$)	1.5028	+0.11c	1.4873
¥/(\$)	111.360	-20.06	101.355
\$/Index	96.1	-0.1	93.9

OTHER INDICATORS

	Yesterday	Day's chg.	Year Ago	Index	Latest Yr Ago	Next Day
DM Brent \$	23.22	+0.17	16.70	RPI	153.8 +2.7pc	149.7 12 Dec
Gold \$	378.50	+0.65	368.07	GDP	-106.9 +2.3pc	105.7 Jan 27

WATERPROOF WINDPROOF BREATHABLE

ALL-WEATHER CLOTHING AT

HOUSE OF FRASER



Dangers in the City's runaway gravy train

Everybody knows that the City pays itself too much. What is not generally appreciated, is that the very high rates of bonus enhanced remuneration securities firms pay their staff are almost certainly not justified by the profits and return on capital they earn. Indeed, if those who pay themselves so much in the City were to find such runaway excess in the ordinary commercial and industrial companies they invest in and analyse, they would rightly run a mile, thinking this symptomatic of massive management failure.

And yet that is precisely what the latest numbers on the financial performance of stock exchange member firms show. Boosted by big bonuses, the trend in staff costs continues to move upwards at a brisk pace. Admittedly they are not yet as high as they were at the peak of the last bull market towards the end of 1993, but don't forget that most organisations have been downsize by anything up to 20 per cent since then. Further, bonuses for the year to the end of last June were at record levels with every prospect of moving higher still this year.

Other costs have meanwhile been cut back quite sharply with the result that overall costs have only increased year on year quite marginally by 1 per cent. It ought to be clear what is going on here. Staff are in effect gobbling up all the efficiency gains being made in these firms through enhanced pay and bonuses. The oddest thing about it is the apparent willingness of those who own

these businesses to tolerate the persistence of this extraordinary gravy train, for it isn't as if the returns even in present market conditions are that remarkable.

If they were, then the owners would perhaps be justified in sharing it around a bit. But they are not. As the Stock Exchange report concludes "The long-term average return is only six per cent and despite recent favourable conditions, the modest return of the past year would be lower still if firms in aggregate had not reduced the amount of capital employed". Some firms will be doing better than that, of course, but on the whole this doesn't look like the sort of business you want to be in, not as an investor in any case.

Now if you are an employee, it is a different matter, for the astonishing irony is that modern day securities firms actually seem to be closer in terms of who they serve to worker cooperatives than the corporations most of them are supposed to be. Perhaps before preaching to the rest of us about capital being a scarce commodity, the importance of keeping wages under control and all the rest of that annoying but only too true free market guff, the City ought to think first about setting its own house in order. Some chance.

Small fire in the Channel Tunnel, not many injured. The reaction in the financial markets to the blaze on board one of Eurotunnel's freight shuttles on Monday night was remarkably sanguine. The shares were off just 3.5p yesterday and the price at which its debt trades was barely changed at a shade under 40 per cent.

Perhaps the markets have become so accustomed to Eurotunnel's never ending succession of crises that they cannot summon up the energy to worry about one more. When you have debts of £9bn and no hope of making a profit until well into the next millennium, what do five burned out wagons and a two-thirds reduction in capacity really matter, even in the run-up to Christmas?

But perhaps the markets are being just a little too phlegmatic in their response. There is something about passengers emerging from a tunnel under the sea choking on the fumes and pursued by "blow-torch" like heat that has a special resonance. Fires on board ferries are not much fun either, as one of Eurotunnel's bankers was quick to point out yesterday, but at least you can swim for it whereas the options 30 metres underneath the sea bed are somewhat more limited.

If the images from Monday night resonate enough with travel agents and the InterGovernmental Safety Authority, which licences Eurotunnel to operate, then the company and the project could be in trouble. There are two worries here. Will the fire and the resultant adverse publicity blow a big enough hole in Eurotunnel's revenues to make the arithmetic for its £8.7bn debt rescheduling look even more dubious?

Second, will Eurotunnel find itself having to make very expensive and time-consuming modifications to its freight shuttle design to give lorry drivers the same degree of fire protection afforded to holidaymakers? If it does then Eurotunnel will find its operational efficiency and hence revenue-earning capacity being hit. Sir Alastair Morton may yet be summoned out of retirement for Channel Tunnel 2: The Ultimate Crisis.

The pursuit of long-term success in business is the holy grail of all executives, investors and policy makers, so we should not perhaps get too worked up about the launch of the Kleinwort Benson Tomorrow's Company Exempt Trust, a new unit trust dedicated to investing in companies that take an "inclusive approach" to management. All the same, KB has latched on to quite compelling and highly saleable investment fad here which others are bound to follow. Even accountants, long the object of wrath for their concentration on the numbers, have started talking about a "balanced scorecard" approach to financial reporting, while recent changes to accounting standards have done much to help readers of financial statements gain a wider view of company performance. A fund that seeks to move away from pure number-crunching and towards a more balanced approach to what constitutes "a successful company" should do well.

The Tomorrow's Company report, which inspired the creation of the new trust, was criticised by many when it appeared last year for being too wistful-washy. Even so it did set out some clear criteria, including paying attention to "stakeholders" other than shareholders, for companies seeking to qualify as "inclusive". Kleinwort has gone on to list five "behavioural aspects" to consider alongside business processes and financial results. They are communicating the company's purpose and values; identifying key sources of sustainable success; developing a unique success model and measuring its results; placing a positive value on key relationships with such groups as suppliers, customers, the community and employees; and maintaining a healthy licence to operate.

The idea is that, soft and intangible as these criteria may be, they are still capable of being measured, and of having a positive financial effect. For instance, environmental concerns become financial issues when a pollution incident occurs, while a company that has its systems all running perfectly is still likely to find itself in trouble if it neglects customer service or investment in the development of its people. The only problem with all this is that every chief executive is going to claim that his or her company is meeting all these criteria. It will be up to the researchers to distinguish the real smart company from the many counterfeits.

Solid pop sales pump up the profits at EMI

Matthew Horsman
Media Editor

EMI, the music recording, publishing and retail arm of the now-demerged Thorn-EMI, yesterday cheered the City with better-than-expected half-year results, buoyed by solid sales from such lead acts as George Michael and Tina Turner.

Analysts said that big sellers in the current period, led by the new all-female band Spice Girls, would give an extra boost to the crucial second half, which includes the Christmas season. Pre-tax profits of £112.5m, up 9.4 per cent on a pro-forma basis, indicated that recent gloom and doom in the music business might have been overplayed, analysts added yesterday. The shares, which still bear a slight stock-market premium on takeover hopes, rose 23.5p to £12.94p yesterday.

Sir Colin Southgate, EMI's

chairman, said yesterday the market had been misled by recent poor results from such music giants as Polygram and MCA, which did not necessarily point to a downward secular trend in sales.

"There is a tremendous misunderstanding about the [music] market," he said. "When you account for differences in wholesale and retail markets, and recent currency movements, the trends are actually quite good."

The US market, he said, has been softer, he conceded, but Europe and the dynamic economies of South-east Asia and Latin America more than made up for it. EMI's business is heavily weighted toward Europe and other world markets, and the company has never developed a leading presence in the US.

The results were also helped by EMI's relatively light exposure to such difficult markets as classical music, and by its strong

local catalogues, particularly in South America and Europe.

EMI's third quarter, which coincides with the Christmas selling period, is likely to be somewhat disappointing, however, due to the lack of big-name releases. The company is expected to rely more on its back catalogue to drive compilation sales, and on one or two big sellers, which could include the new Spice Girls album and the third and final instalment of the Beatles Anthology album, which entered the US charts at number one. Also scheduled for third-quarter release is a three-album special from the artist formerly known as Prince.

EMI has high hopes for Spice Girls, the UK-based band. The all-girl group is "definitely part of a trend," Sir Colin said. "We have seen all-boy bands, but now it's the turn of the girls."

The fourth quarter, starting 1 January, is expected to be par-



Flavour of the month: EMI is backing all-girl hands like Spice Girls (above) as the latest trend

ticularly strong, with new work from Duran Duran, Simple Minds, Blur, Supergrass and Robbie Williams, formerly with the hit group Take That.

Elsewhere in the group, the music publishing arm had a record half, which the company is actively seeking to build. The HMV retail operations, mean-

while, saw sales ahead by 17.4 per cent to £359.8m, on which the company made an expected seasonal loss of £11m. Analysts expect full-year

figures of about £400m, or about 34p a share. The company declared an interim dividend of 8p a share, up from 7.1p last time.

Visitors lift Euro Disney by 55%

Tom Stevenson

A sharp increase in visitor numbers to Disneyland Paris, better occupancy rates at the theme park's hotels and higher spending per head helped Euro Disney to a 55 per cent rise in underlying profits in the year to September.

The debt-laden leisure company admitted, however, that the interest costs on its borrowings are set to rise rapidly over the next few years forcing it to run hard simply to stand still in profit terms.

Philippe Bourguignon, chairman and chief executive, said: "We are proud of what has been accomplished in a difficult economic environment, particularly for the tourism industry. Persistent weakness in the economy, constant pressure on our prices and the strong increase in financial charges constitute several real challenges for the future, particularly in 1997."

Attendances rose by 9 per cent to 11.7 million visitors in the year to September, the second full-year period since a financial restructuring in 1994 rescued Euro Disney. Numbers were boosted by the opening of the Space Mountain ride, the introduction of lower winter prices in October 1995 and the completion of high-speed direct train links with western France and London.

Occupancy rates in the park's seven hotels increased to 72 per cent, up 4 percentage points, and spend per room increased by 3 per cent to just over £11,000. Those trends helped operating revenues increase 9 per cent to £4,978m (£584m) and after a smaller 3 per cent rise in costs underlying profits emerged at £724m, up from £467m in 1995.

That more than made up for a £103m increase in finance costs due to the partial unwinding of the interest and royalty holidays negotiated in 1994, leaving income before exceptional items of £156m (£123m).

Projections of interest payments, however, show that profits will have to continue to grow sharply simply to meet the higher charges. By 1998, interest payments will be running £430m higher than in 1995 and the following year royalties and a management charge to Walt Disney begin a progressive rise.

Despite its persistent financial worries Euro Disney is planning an extravagant year-long celebration of its fifth birthday this year and has ambitious plans for the 1300 hectares of its 2000 hectare site that remain undeveloped.

Vodafone buys Peoples Phone in £77m deal

Chris Godsmark
Business Correspondent

Vodafone yesterday strengthened its grip on the UK's mobile phone market with a £77m "defensive" deal to buy Peoples Phone, the largest independent service provider. The company also gave an upbeat assessment of the market's growth prospects.

In the group's second such acquisition in the space of four months it will take over Peoples Phone's 181 shops on top of its existing total of 230 and will add 395,000 subscribers. The chain made losses of £7.3m in 1995 which it blamed on the cost of its expansion programme. Vodafone will also take on £15m of debt.

Service providers buy up wholesale airtime from the big networks and sell it to consumers. Vodafone emerged as the most successful bidder in competition with Cellnet and Orange. Some 94 per cent of Peoples Phone's customers were already on the Vodafone network.

In July Vodafone paid £33.6m to buy up the remaining two thirds of the Talkland chain which it did not already own. The deal, which also involved taking over debts of almost £30m, brought its total number of subscribers signed up through service providers to more than 1.1 million.

The purchase of Peoples Phone will bring a cash windfall worth more than £3m to the four individual shareholders who provided the original capital to start the company in 1988.

Three directors who provided seedcorn investment, Nigel Wray, Peter Whitfield and Robert Tanner, together make around £2.5m, while Charles Wigoder, the former chief executive, will earn some £558,000. In addition it represents a profit of £9.8m for the main shareholder, merchant bankers

Singer & Friedlander, which built up a 30 per cent stake over the past three years.

However, it represents a crushing blow to the company's initial ambitions to raise around £200m from a stock market listing. Tony Solomon, chairman of Peoples Phone and of Singer & Friedlander, insisted the deal, arranged by the Swiss banking group UBS, was still a good one.

It also emerged that Mr Wigoder has settled his claim against Peoples Phone for unfair dismissal following the decision to pull the flotation. He was also being sued by his former employer with allegations of accounting irregularities. Mr Solomon declined to give details of the settlement.

Sir Gerald Wheat, Vodafone's outgoing chief executive, admitted the purchase was a defensive move. He said the deal made sense "when another organisation holds a large number of your subscribers and puts itself on the market... We would hate to think of 400,000 of our customers falling into the wrong hands."

The announcement came as Vodafone, which leads the UK market, revealed a 21 per cent rise in pre-tax profits for the six months to the end of September to £232.4m. In an more upbeat assessment of the UK mobile phone business, it claimed customers spending levels were stabilising after a severe price war earlier this year.

Revenue per customer also fell from £481 to £430, though Vodafone said this was better than its forecast of a drop to just over £400.

The so-called churn rate, the rate at which customers move to other networks, rose from 25 per cent to 27.34 per cent as many subscribers switched to the digital service from the old analogue system.

The shares rose 10.5p to 254p.

Second weekly draw set as Camelot profits slump

Tom Stevenson
City Editor

The first midweek National Lottery draw will be held on 5 February 1997. Camelot said yesterday. The Wednesday jackpot is expected to settle at about £4m, cannibalising the Saturday draw slightly but increasing the game's weekly income from its current £69m to over £80m.

News of the second weekly draw emerged as Camelot reported a sharp drop in profits for the 24 weeks to September, following a slump in demand for the Instant scratchcards which were launched just prior to the

comparable period in 1995. After weekly sales of £44m in their first few weeks, turnover has settled at about £17m.

In contrast to the rapid fall in Instant sales, which Camelot chief executive Tim Holley said was expected and a better performance than other lotteries around the world, sales of tickets for the main weekly draw actually rose by 2 per cent during the period to £1.88bn as the Lottery continued to exert a strong grip on the UK's £24bn a year gaming industry.

Total sales to the half year were £2.1bn, of which over £1bn went in prizes. £568m was distributed to good causes

and £270m was taken by the Government in tax. Sales in the comparable six-month period were £2.51bn.

The sharp fall in sales was reflected in a fall in pre-tax profits from £36.2m to £31.5m at Camelot, 90 per cent of which is owned in equal proportions by Cadbury Schweppes, De La Rue, GfJech and Rascal. The remaining 10 per cent is held by ICL, the computer company owned by Fujitsu of Japan. The consortium of owners shared in a £10m dividend.

Sir George Russell, chairman, said the Lottery had been highly successful since its launch in November 1994. In its first

THE NATIONAL LOTTERY - KEY FACTS

Average weekly sales	£69m, up 17% since launch
Sales since launch	£6.956bn
Donations to good causes	£2.493bn
Uncollected prize amount to	£58.9m
Largest jackpot to date	£42m (3 winners)
Winners of more than £1m	268
Average spend by social class	AB - £2.32 C1 - £2.67

50% of adult population have played the lottery
All figures - November 1994 - October 1996

two years, he said, a total of £3.7bn had been generated for the country - £2.5bn for good causes in the arts, sport, heritage, charities and the Millennium fund, and £1.2bn in tax.

More than £3bn has been paid out in prizes, with 533 jackpot winners of the total 127 million winners. About two thirds of the adult population play the Lottery regularly, with members of C2 social class

spending marginally more per head. The game is most popular in the North-east where the average weekly spend per play is £3.15 compared with £2.33 in London and only £2.03 in the South-west.

To counter criticisms that the Lottery encourages excessive gambling and makes excessive profits Camelot has established a charitable foundation, which it expects to put £5m into this year.

Kleinwort seeks fresh investment goals

Roger Trapp

Kleinwort Benson is seeking to counter the City's reputation for basing investment decisions purely on financial criteria. It is launching a fund that will buy stock in companies that pay attention to a wide range of stakeholders and other aspects of the "inclusive approach" put for-

ward by the Royal Society for the encouragement of the Arts, Manufactures and Commerce Inquiry "Tomorrow's Company".

The Kleinwort Benson Tomorrow's Company Exempt Trust, launched yesterday by the firm's investment management arm, is seeking to give investors "superior, sustainable, long-term returns" at a time when in-

flation and gross domestic product are expected to show only minimal growth.

The announcement of the fund follows research by Kleinwort Benson Investment Management showing that a model portfolio of companies fitting the RSA team's criteria would have significantly outperformed the FTSE All-Share index be-

tween December 1992 and June 1996.

Brennan Horms, chief investment officer at Kleinwort Benson Investment Management, said that the investment process behind this model complemented the firm's research-based approach to fund management.

Paul Sheehan, who will manage the new fund's investments,

said: "This product is innovative because it broadens the scope of the investment process."

Among behavioural aspects the firm will look at are communicating the company's values; identifying key sources of sustainable success; and placing a value of key relationships with groups such as customers, suppliers, the community and, above all, employees.

Morgan's fallen stars bottom of class

Bill Treanor
Banking Correspondent

The once top performing funds run by Morgan Grenfell are languishing at the bottom of the league tables after the Peter Young affair, despite receiving a £180m cash injection by Deutsche, the German bank that owns the fund management group.

At the start of September Morgan Grenfell suspended trading for three days in the three star funds in which 90,000 people had invested £1.4bn. Investors in the funds - Europa,

European Growth and European Capital Growth - have since redeemed at least £180m of their holdings.

The Europa fund, managed by Stewart Armer, who is not directly implicated in the scandal but who had made similar investments in high-technology stocks like Mr Young, was the top performing fund in its sector until the start of the year.

However, it is now ranked 127th out of the 130 similar funds tracked by Miroval, the company that measures the performance of funds.

The value of Europa has fallen 9.74 per cent since 9 September, the start of the first full week of trading after the dealing suspension was lifted.

The value of the European Growth Fund, managed by Mr Young, fell 6.41 per cent over the same period putting it in 110th place.

Until the start of the year it was the sector's second most successful fund.

The performance record of the other fund formerly managed by Mr Young, European Capital Growth, is not available from Miroval.

However, the Miroval data shows that the European unit trust sector as a whole performed poorly over the period, falling 4.42 per cent.

Peter Jeffreys, managing director of Fund Research, an independent company that monitors the industry, said the weakness in the European sector could largely be explained by the strength of sterling in recent weeks.

Deutsche has pledged to compensate any investors who have lost out because of the actions of Mr Young, who is now under investigation by the Serious Fraud Office. Investors

allege Mr Young set up a series of shell firms in which his funds had invested and also breached limits on the amount of unlisted securities which unit trusts are allowed to buy.

Mrro, the investment regulator, is working on the complex calculations that will determine whether, and how much, compensation is due.

Separately, Deutsche Bank yesterday bought the 50 per cent stake it did not already own in Ivor Jones, Roy, a South African stockbroker firm. It will rename the broker Deutsche Morgan Grenfell.



Under investigation: Peter Young the ex-fund manager

business

Allied Colloids pays \$390m for chemical firm

Magnus Grimond

Allied Colloids is mounting its biggest acquisition with the \$390m (£233m) purchase of CPS Chemical Company, a US supplier of chemical intermediates to the Bradford-based group. To help pay for the deal, Allied is tapping shareholders for £175m in its first rights issue for 20 years.

The sale will net \$187m for Phil Meisel, the man who founded the CPS business in 1955 and whose family still controls 96 per cent of the shares. His sons are less involved in the business and at the age of 69, he has decided to retire. He will be retained by Allied as a consultant for a year.

The move was generally well received by the stock market yesterday, despite the simultaneous announcement of a modest 4 per cent rise in interim profits to £21.1m. Allied's shares fell just 5p to 138p, well above the rights terms. Shareholders are being offered two new shares at 118p each for every seven held, with the rights fully underwritten by Kleinwort Benson.

The acquisition follows a period of management change at Allied Colloids, including the imminent retirement of chairman Sir Trevor Holdsworth and the appointment 18 months ago of David Farrar, who previously ran the group's North American arm for four years. Mr Farrar said CPS had been a long-term acquisition target for some time. The two companies had built up a close relationship in the eight years CPS had been supplying Allied and the latter was its largest customer, representing 14 per cent of annual sales.

Like Allied, CPS is involved in water soluble polymers, although its products come at an earlier stage in the supply



Calling it a day: Sir Trevor Holdsworth will shortly be retiring as Allied Colloids makes its biggest acquisition

chain. Mr Farrar claimed CPS leads the world in its niche, with products used in the treatment of effluent, drinking water and to maintain cleanliness in boilers and cooling towers, amongst other applications. Customers include the mining, oil and water treatment industries.

"It brings us into a market which has grown at some 10 to 15 per cent over the past five years," Mr Farrar said. CPS would "enhance our core chemistry" and bring synergies. Over the next year or two, the combined purchasing power of the groups would allow them to buy at lower prices, while the US group's reach could be extended

to Europe and the Far East using Allied's 400-man sales force. Currently 78 per cent of sales are within the US.

He dismissed the loss of business from two customers, including the French group Floerger, its main rival, after they decided to build their own intermediates plant at the end of 1995. That has hit results this year, but the £23m of lost sales had since been more than made up elsewhere and Floerger had returned as a customer.

Allied said that, after exceptional development of new products in cash handling should also deliver long-term benefits, even if it hit returns

De La Rue facing a credibility gap

THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

EDITED BY TOM STEVENSON

De La Rue has had things too easy for too long. The group's sharp rise in profits in the early 1990s was brought to a shuddering halt last year and two trading warnings have brought the shares to their level four years ago. Many of the problems lie in the recent upsurge in new capacity attracted into the lucrative commercially-supplied banknote market, which De La Rue dominates.

De La Rue can hardly be blamed for that. But it also enjoyed a one-off and unrepeatable boost from the break-up of the Russian monopoly on banknote production in the former Soviet empire. It produced the paper money for the newly independent states and helped them to build their own state-owned printing plants.

The chickens have come home to roost over the 30 months as bank note margins have tumbled, but De La Rue was calling the turn yesterday. Reporting pre-tax profits down 13 per cent for the six months to September to £60.3m, chief executive Jeremy Marshall said there were signs that pricing was stabilising. Indeed prices are showing a rise of around 4 per cent in the latest six months, giving the group the confidence to raise the interim dividend by 3.4 per cent to 7.5p.

There was also encouraging news from Portals, the security paper company acquired last year for a net £54m after disposals. That business raised its profits a third to around £13.5m in the period. Meanwhile, Garmy, the German safes to cash handling business, appears to be recovering from the competition which hit it last year, with profits up from £700,000 to £1.6m in the six months, and US orders are returning despite the continuing disruption from bank mergers.

But De La Rue still has something of a credibility gap to overcome. Far from increasing barriers to entry and so widening margins, adding gizmos to banknotes like optically variable ink, which changes colour depending on the angle of view, has actually squeezed returns as the prices charged have not covered the increased cost. Margins in the security paper and print division, De La Rue's most profitable, have accordingly slumped from close to 26 per cent to just over 21 per cent.

In the long run, the group still has plenty going for it. Holograms on bank notes and "smart" chips on payment cards, another market it dominates, should provide differentiation and a spur to growth.

The extra £4.7m spent in the half year on development of new products in cash handling should also deliver long-term benefits, even if it hit returns

Vodafone keeps rivals at bay

Judging by Vodafone's half-yearly results yesterday, confidence is tentatively returning to the mobile phone market, turned on its head early this year when Vodafone and Cellnet, threatened by the upstart Orange, launched a massive price war. The result was a period of damaging turbulence, as all four networks signed up customers who wanted the kudos of owning a mobile phone but apparently didn't want to make any calls on it. Average spend per customer was on its way down from around £600 in 1994 to somewhere approaching £400 depending on the operator.

At first glance Vodafone's figures, despite a 21 per cent rise in pre-tax profits to £52.2m, show all the scars of battle. Its customer base grew by just 203,000 in the half-year to the end of September, down from 371,000 the previous year. Cash earned from each subscriber also fell from £481 to £430, while it is having to pay more to service providers, the retailers who sell mobile phone airtime, to persuade customers to sign up.

Yet Vodafone has come off better than its three rivals, most particularly by pulling out a huge lead over Orange in the digital market. As Sir Gerald Wheat, the group's retiring chief executive, pointed out, in January Vodafone had just 17,000 more digital subscribers than Orange, whereas now the lead has stretched to 300,000. Orange would no doubt argue that its customers are fast becoming more loyal and spend more, but the fact remains that Vodafone has strengthened its role as market leader, backed up by much greater marketing muscle. Seen in this light its £77m takeover of Peoples Phone, which admittedly made losses of £7.3m last year, seems a sensible defensive move. The second source of strength which singles out Vodafone is its international expansion.

Which turned in a profit, including exceptional costs, for the first time. Vodafone forecasts the UK market will grow next year at 20-25 per cent about the same rate as 1996. The business is likely to remain as competitive as ever, however, and prospective earnings growth in the low to mid-teens makes the shares, up 11.5p to 254p, look pricey on a prospective price/earnings ratio of 23 falling to 20.

Unigate delivers under pressures

No one can accuse Ross Buckland of inaction during his tenure as Unigate's chief executive. Non-core businesses such as the US restaurants have been sold along with the stake in Nutricia, the baby foods business, last year. Unigate is now focused on food and the Wincanton distribution division. Investors are waiting for the next move.

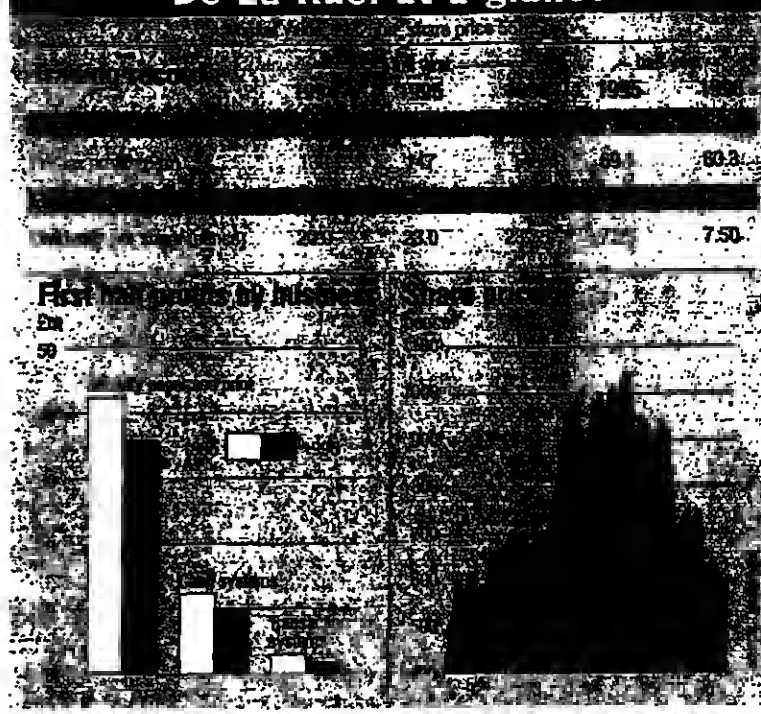
The sale of the Nutricia stake for £300m was a year ago now and very little of the cash has been spent. Unigate had £56m of cash at the end of the half year, a figure that will rise to the best part of £130m at the year end.

Management is clearly looking for a deal. A US deal has more or less been ruled out as Unigate would be a small player in a large market. A continental European operation to strengthen Wincanton is the likely option. Though the company admits it has funds for a "sizeable acquisition" Mr Buckland is unlikely to hurry a deal as the performance in the core business is steady. Pre-tax profits were flat at £60m due to lower prices of butter and milk powder products as well as the absence of the Nutricia contribution.

The fresh foods division, which includes the St Ivel and Malton pig meat businesses, performed strongly with profits 29 per cent higher. However, the dairy business continues to be affected by lower doorstep deliveries. These were 11 per cent down on the previous year though the rate of decline is slowing. A further problem was the loss of a supermarket customer which caused supermarket sales to fall by 2.4 per cent. Wincanton continues to win new distribution contracts, with Argos, Lever Brothers and Mars among the latest recruits.

Assuming full year profits of £126m, Unigate shares - up 2p at 432p yesterday - trade on a forward rating of 11. There are competitive pressures, such as Unilever attempting to build its margarine market share, but the shares look good value.

De La Rue: at a glance



Norcross back on dividend list

Patrick Toohar

Norcross, the industrial conglomerate in the process of unshuffling itself, yesterday returned to the dividend list but indicated that long-suffering shareholders may have to wait up to two years for cash to be returned to them.

A special payment to investors has been promised once Norcross completes the sale of its printing and packaging operations to concentrate on ceramics, adhesives and Triton showers activities.

But the disposal of the two remaining printing and packaging businesses - Norprint and Autotype - has been put on hold and yesterday Joe Matthews, chief executive, indicated no sale was imminent.

"The dividend does not fit in with our long-term plans, but there is more to do before they are in good enough shape to sell. Until we reach a positive cash position share buybacks or other special dividend are really a non-issue," he said, noting the balance sheet still contained debt.

Mr Matthews added that a £20m property portfolio still had to be unwound, which could

take "between 18 months and two years" to complete.

Results for the six months to September showed a net £46m was raised from the sale of two printing and packaging businesses that eliminated the deficit on reserves and allowed Norcross to pay a 1p interim dividend - its first payout for two years.

Norcross also reported a 17 per cent rise in operating profit to £6.9m for the group's continuing operations. Pre-tax profits were £51.2m, boosted by the £45.8m in exceptional gains from disposals.

Net borrowings fell by £30m to just under £17m, or 11 per cent of shareholders' funds, versus gearing of 37 per cent in March.

Despite the disappointing news on a special payment, shares in Norcross - as high as 400p in the late Eighties - closed 4p higher at 93p.

Norcross, which escaped a £570m takeover bid from Williams, the industrial conglomerate in 1987, has undergone almost continuous restructuring since Michael Doherty succeeded John Redwood, the former Conservative Party leadership candidate, a year later.

Surprise profits rise boosts BOC

Chris Godsmark Business Correspondent

BOC, the industrial gases group, yesterday surprised the stock market with a better-than-expected jump in earnings, just three months after a veiled profits warning triggered a big share price drop.

The latest news, which sent the group's shares surging by more than 5 per cent, was accompa-

nied by a plea from Danny Rosenkranz, the recently appointed chief executive, that BOC had been "misunderstood".

"To say we're frustrated with the way we've been by the markets is a bit strong, but we are clearly disappointed," he complained. "The task we have set is to explain our strategy in more depth. We are a lot more exciting than we are seen out there."

BOC's profits in the year to the end of September were a record £444.9m, while turnover increased by 7 per cent to £4.02bn. The company declared a 7.4 per cent increase in its dividend for the year ahead to 25p.

Gas analysts apparently took the plea to heart, with shares closing up 44.5p at 880.5p.

Mr Rosenkranz insisted his profits warning in August had been widely misinterpreted. At the time BOC mentioned prob-

lems in its Edwards vacuum products division following the drop in growth at some of its biggest customers, the leading computer chip manufacturers.

The company revealed yesterday a 28 per cent increase in operating profits to £90.3m for the vacuum products business. Though some orders from the semiconductor industry were likely to be deferred, the business remained highly profitable.

At the time BOC mentioned prob-

Warning by Country Casuals hits shares

Nigel Cope

Country Casuals, the women's wear retailer, was looking distinctly frayed at the edges yesterday when it issued a profits warning just a month after disappointing first-half figures.

The company warned investors that this year's profit would be "materially below" forecasts and said it would not be recommending the payment of a final dividend.

Country Casuals shares plunged 36p to 64p on the news, their lowest point since the com-

pany came to the market in 1992, fuelling speculation that it could again become a takeover target. It is only a year since Country Casuals successfully fought off a £27m bid from former chief executive John Shannon which valued the group at 140p per share.

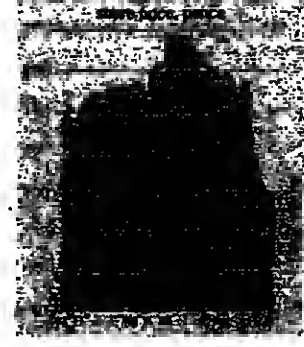
Management blamed the latest setback on a "significant deterioration" in trading since its interim results in October. Full year profits will now be "no less" than £1m compared with previous forecasts of £2.4m.

While the core Country Ca-

suals stores have reported strong trading in recent weeks, Elvi, the new chain aimed at larger women, has not been able to sustain the year-on-year growth of the first half. Loro Piana, the troubled menswear manufacturing subsidiary, continues to rack up monthly losses.

Mark Bunce, chief executive, said: "I feel this is a short-term issue. We've got a core business (Country Casuals) that made profits of £2.5m last year. The problem is we have a start-up business (Elvi) and a manufacturing division that are dragging

Country Casuals



that down at the moment," Mr Bunce said. Elvi needed to grow sales to move into profitability. While like-for-like sales increases were running at 24 per cent in October, they have since slowed to 10-15 per cent. Elvi has grown to a 56 strong chain since its formation three years ago.

Living without George Michael at a Capital bash

PEOPLE & BUSINESS

To the opening of Capital Radio's new radio theme restaurant in London's Leicester Square, where despite the non-appearance of the star guest, George Michael, a fab time was had by all.

With Tamara Beckwith, Lionel Richie, Chris Rea and David Seaman to rub shoulders with, not to mention a scribe or two from the Independent, who needs George Michael anyway?

I say all, but Richard Eyre, Capital's Bible-bashing chief executive was looking decidedly grumpy as the hacks and other assembled free-loaders downed his champagne in copious quantities.

What on earth's the matter? It transpires that he's still feeling mighty peeved at the generally poor press he received last week for his £51m acquisition of the My Kinda Town restaurant chain. "That was a very poor show indeed. Whatever hap-

pened to recognition of bold management," he complained bitterly.

Who knows? Maybe he's right after all and radio will mix well with the restaurant trade. Looks as if he's onto a winner with the Leicester Square site, in any case.

Student protests, once characterised by tear gas and calls for the overthrow of capitalism, aren't what they used to be. Consider this: Peter Rosengard, the life assurance salesman who helped found the Comedy Store in London, has just been interviewed for a television programme about contrasts between the so-called 1980s and insecure 1990s.

In the Carlton show, *The Big Story*, which goes out this Thursday, Mr Rosengard gives this example of how times have changed.

"I was driving along Oxford Street when I saw a student demo. I slowed down to

hear what they were chanting, and it went: "What do we want? - Pensions! - When do we want them? - Now!"

Nothing about LBJ or down with Thatcher. Just a blood-curdling demand for index-linked pensions.

The Eric Cantona Quote of the Week Award goes to Lord Runciman of Dorset, deputy chairman of SIB, who delivered the Securities Institute annual lecture last night. At one point in his speech on regulation Lord Runciman quoted this Cantona-like German proverb: "What happens when two great trees meet in the forest? Both smile."

Later he went one better and quoted a Greek proverb: "Lame ducks don't open Pandora's boxes." But his Lordship admitted he had made the second one up.

Lord MacLaurin of Knebworth, chairman of Tesco, and Sir Brian Corby, former

chairman of the Pru, will exchange honours this Thursday in an academic version of pass the parcel.

Lord MacLaurin will be formally installed as Chancellor of the University of Hertfordshire during a ceremony in the Cathedral and Abbey Church of St Alban. He succeeds Sir Brian, who in keeping with the traditional ceremony will hand over a scroll to the Tesco chief as a symbol of his leadership. Following the bandover of leadership, Sir Brian will be awarded an honorary Doctor of Science (DSc) degree. Elite long-serving members of De La Rue, the maker of bank notes, can join the De La Rue Club, I hear. The club consists of 81 employees, all of whom have worked at De La Rue for 37 years. Next year is the 50th anniversary of the club.

Apparently the company has a high proportion of long-term employees be-

cause of the technical expertise involved in making forgery-proof bank notes. Sources inform me that one of the key topics of conversation during the annual lunch in London is which members have died since the last one. Sadder still, the De La Rue Club was for employees of 40 years' duration, but staff turnover has led to a lowering of the age specification.

Brownyn Curtis, described by colleagues as "a glamorous, dynamic former ballet dancer", is joining Nomura as chief economist from Deutsche Morgan Grenfell, where she was global head of foreign exchange and fixed income strategy.

Mrs Curtis is a graduate in economics and mathematics from La Trobe University in Australia and then completed an MSc at the London School of Economics.

John Willcock



Tamara Beckwith: Available to rub shoulders with

IN BRIEF

Enterprise Inns confirmed it would be interested in buying pubs from Bass It, as rumoured, it is forced to sell up to 1,000 in return for regulatory clearance of its proposed takeover of Carlsberg-Tetley. Enterprise reported a 50 per cent rise in profit before tax and exceptional items in its first full-year figures since last November's flotation. Underlying profits of £8.5m compared with 1995's £5.6m. Enterprise, which came to the market at 145p, closed yesterday 12p higher at 250.5p.

Shares in Vision Group, the camera microchip group, soared 22 per cent to 324.5p yesterday when the company said three new contracts would lead to sharply higher volumes this year. The new business has led the group to raise £11.5m through a three-for-19 rights issue priced at 23p. Vision will need to expand and relocate its Edinburgh head office. Vision announced increased losses of £2.5m for the year to July compared with a £1.6m loss last year.

Azlan, the computer services group, is paying up to £29.6m for Azlan, a Dutch network computer training specialist. The deal will be funded by a three-for-10 rights issue at 620p a share, raising £48.5m. Azlan's interim figures showed a 74 per cent increase in turnover to £127m and pre-tax profits rose to £6m from £4.4m.

Povair, which makes synthetic microporous materials, saw its shares crash 68.5p to 196.5p yesterday after its second profits warning in four months. The shares are at less than half their 12-month high of 431p. The company said it would not make profits this year of more than £4.2m, much lower than analysts' expectations of up to £7m. Analysts said yesterday they believed the fundamental attractions of the stock remained, however, and some used the sharp fall to change their recommendation to buy.

Ian Plenderleith, an executive director of the Bank of England, told a conference in London yesterday that there was no reason to think staying out of the single European currency would harm the City. He gave six reasons why London would retain its international position. The City has role in global, as opposed to European markets. Improvements in the Continental markets so far have increased business in London. Despite the uncertainties about UK membership of Emu, foreign banks have continued to expand in the City. Economies of scale in financial activity have further concentrated in London. The City has the advantage of the English language and time zone. And, finally, its financial infrastructure has continued to improve.

NetWest Bank yesterday announced plans to issue £300m of 15-year subordinated notes. The notes bear an interest rate of 8.125 per cent for the first 10 years and at 1.6 per cent over five-year Treasury stock for the remaining five years.

Company Results				
	Turnover £	Pre-tax £	EPS	Dividend
Adams & Harvey (F)	24.2m (27.3m)	2.55m (2.54m)	34.6p (30.0p)	12.25p (11.0p)
Allied Colloids (F)	200m (191m)	21.1m (20.3m)	2.84p (2.61p)	0.64p (0.60p)
Adrian (F)	128m (72.7m)	6.0m (4.4m)	15p (13.6p)	1.5p (1.2p)
Bell Bros (F)	38.2m (33.5m)	5.02m (5.77m)	33.27p (28.83p)	3.5p (3.0p)
BOC (F)	4.02bn (3.73bn)	445m (402m)	67.74p (61.97p)	14.5p (13.5p)
Canalish (F)	2.08m (2.51m)	31.6m (38.2m)	-	-
Canal (F)	64.5m (73.2m)	3.75m (2.80m)	20.28p (15.89p)	9.8p (8.0p)
De La Rue (F)	141m (128m)	60.3m (58.1m)	15.7p (13.1p)	7.5p (6.0p)
EMI Group (F)	1.47bn (1.44bn)	113m (102m)	15.1p (13.5p)	8p (7.0p)
Enterprise Inns (F)	38.1m (24.8m)	5.54m (5.65m)	10.34p (14.2p)	6.75p (5.75p)
European Colours (F)	10.3m (10.2m)	1.6m (1.36m)	2.41p (2.35p)	0.80p (0.75p)
Ferraris (F)	18.1m (13.2m)	1.43m (0.69m)	9.7p (6.4p)	2.5p (2.0p)
Gold Threadmill (F)	3.0m (2.74m)	0.96m (0.40m)	2.1p (0.9p)	-
Great Portland Est (F)	-	21.9m (23.8m)	5.1p (5.6p)	2.5p (2.0p)
Household Brewery (F)	79.8m (74.2m)	10.5m (9.5m)	11.5p (10.34p)	2.1p (1.75p)
Merchand Retail (F)	25.4m (24.3m)	-0.30m (-3.33m)	-0.28p (-0.70p)	-
Mercator (F)	115m (160m)	57.5m (10.7m)	28.5p (0.6p)	10p (8p)
Paddy Partridge (F)	11.8m (9.1m)	0.56m (0.39m)	4.6p (3.2p)	5p (4p)
Rubens Group (F)	30.2m (26.3m)	2.3m (2.5m)	1.72p (1.89p)	0.6p (0.5p)
Unigate (F)	1.14bn (937m)	60.8m (60.4m)	19p (18.6p)	7.5p (6.0p)
Vision Group (F)	4.43m (1.73m)	-2.33m (-1.52m)	-7.38p (-5.61p)	-
Whitworth (F)	74.1m (68.6m)	2.7m (3.4m)	4.4p (5p)	1.75p (1.25p)

(F) - Full (F) - Interim (M) - Nine months

returned from a rest to be well beaten behind
day.

sport

CHAMPIONS' LEAGUE: Ferguson delighted by return of Irishman as Old Trafford welcomes visit of Juventus. Glenn Moore reports

Keane key to United's two sides

Which Manchester United will we see tonight? The mature one which cruised to victory over Fenerbahce in Istanbul a month ago – or the overawed version which was walked over by Juventus in September? Will it be the occasionally expansive, always resilient one which won the Double – or the bewildered United of recent weeks?

England's Jekyll and Hyde champions went some way to rediscovering their preferred personality in beating Arsenal at the weekend. Tonight at Old Trafford they need to complete their recovery. A revenge victory over Juventus in the Champions' League will almost secure their passage to the lucrative quarter-final stage. Defeat could allow Fenerbahce to ease past them.

These matches are often preceded by Alex Ferguson complaining that no other country would force their European representatives to play just days after a major Premiership fixture. This time the roles are reversed. While United played on Saturday Juventus faced Milan, and drew 0-0, on Sunday night. Preparation was further disrupted by bad weather which delayed yesterday's flight to Manchester. Then they are off to Tokyo, to play River Plate of Argentina in the Intercontinental Cup.

Since they appear sure to qualify for the Champions' League quarter-finals, this schedule has led to suspicions that Juventus will not be entirely committed tonight. Ferguson dismissed such suggestions yesterday noting that they still needed one point to make sure.

Two of the Juventus players who overwhelmed United in Turin have since suffered serious injuries. Gianluca Pessotto (Achilles tendon) and Antonio Conte (knee ligament). A third, Christian Vieri, is likely to be dropped. Moreno Torricelli, Angelo Di Livio and Vladimir

Jugovic are the likely replacements. All are internationals. United will be without Denis Irwin and Gary Pallister but they can recall Roy Keane. Ferguson said Karel Poborsky would drop out of the side which defeated Arsenal.

European teams are often described as being slower than English ones but an abiding memory of Turin is Gary Neville confessing his amazement at how fast Juventus were. "They overwhelmed us with their speed and power," said Ferguson, adding, "but our players are better for the experience. They are not afraid of anything."

"It is a bonus to have Keane back. He's a big game player. He raises himself for these games. He has everything. He's quick and aggressive and he passes to our men."

United's passing could be the key. They need to deprive Juventus of the ball while striving to maintain a high tempo of their own.

Nearly 200 media will be present including the current coaches of England and Australia. There will also be two former Juventus players, the legendary John Charles and, interestingly, Fabrizio Ravanelli, of Middlesbrough.

If United sign Ravanelli, as Italian newspapers insist they will, he would be available for the knock-out stages. If United get there, we are told he will be cheering for Juventus tonight – but will he secretly be hoping United also progress?

Milan's long-serving sweeper Franco Baresi, who has missed all four of their Champions' League games this season and watched his side lose two of them, must hold the defence together at FC Porto tonight if his team are to set up a quarter-final against Juventus.



Juventus are open to offers for the gifted Alessandro Del Piero, who visits Old Trafford tonight.

Photograph: Graham Chadwick/AirSport

Del Piero's star beginning to wane

Glenn Moore on a rare talent who may yet join the Italian exodus

United at Old Trafford tonight.

"Hopes to?" A year ago his place would have been unquestioned. He had lit up the group stages of the Champions' League with a series of brilliant individual goals – Borussia Dortmund, Steaua Bucharest and Rangers were bewitched in turn. He was tipped to be the star of Euro '96.

Yet 1996 has proved a grim year for Del Piero. His European Championship lasted 45 minutes before he was replaced by the less exhilarating but more reliable figure of Roberto Donadoni. Since then niggling injuries and inconsistency have put even his club place in doubt. His selection tonight is likely to be due to Antonio Conte's injury rather than his own form.

Giggs will recognise the problem.

Exhaustion, mental as much as physical, has taken its toll while the injuries have been hard to shake off. Overplaying is seen as a British problem but, in one week last year, Del Piero played for Italy, the Under-21s, and the Italian Army (on national service). There were also Juventus' demanding Champions' League and domestic campaigns.

Now, it appears, Juventus are willing to take further advantage of English's football's profligate mood and sell Del Piero as they did Fabrizio Ravanelli. Given Del Piero's youth – he was 22 earlier this

month – it would seem an odd move, but last week Gianni Agnelli, still the power behind the Juventus empire, hinted at the possibility.

"If an English club were to make an offer for Del Piero it would depend on what the player wants," Agnelli said.

Maybe, Ravanelli, also a childhood supporter of the Bianconeri, was given no such choice. If he had been he would have stayed. Del Piero, whose contract runs to 2000, may find himself in a similar position.

Having grown up idolising Michel Platini – whose No 10 shirt he now wears – Del Piero signed for the Vecchia Signora from Padova at 18. He scored five goals in 11 games in his first season but was almost sold to Parma at the end of it. Dino Baggio went instead and Del

Piero stayed to replace Roberto Baggio for club and country and win the Fifa Young Player of the Year award for 1995.

The goal ratio has slowed (20 in 76 Serie A games before this season) but this is partly because he is usually played on the left side of a front three. For Italy he plays on the left of a midfield four but he can also play in the hole or as a conventional forward.

Quite a catch then – but who could afford him? As he prepared to put himself in the shop window tonight, Del Piero said: "I wouldn't be surprised if an English club made a move for me. English football has undergone a vast expansion in terms of finance and skill levels. Also it is far less stressful to play in than Serie A. We'll have to wait and see whether I go over."

Rangers in no mood for holiday

A vacation will be the last thing on the Rangers' players' minds when they Grasshopper Zurich at Ibrox tonight. Four successive defeats in the Champions' League will have dented the Scottish title holders' pride, and they will have been stung by the comments of the Grasshopper striker Kubilay Turkylmaz, who derided Rangers as "holiday-makers" following a 3-0 defeat in Zurich in September.

Archie Knox, Rangers' assistant manager, is aware of a need for a disciplined performance as he is of his charges' understandable indignation.

"It hasn't been discussed by us on a team basis," he said, "but if the players individually feel the need to respond to that then that is up to them."

One indisposed element of Rangers' European campaign will be missing. Paul Gascoigne is suspended tonight as the start of the second of a four-match ban imposed for his red card against Ajax in Amsterdam last month. But Richard Gough, Alex Cleland and Craig Moore can return after suspensions, although Gordon Durie, Stuart McCall and Alan McLaren are out injured.

Ally McCoist may start after being on the substitutes' bench for last Thursday's Old Firm win. McCoist has never scored in the Champions' League and, at 34, is naturally desperate to break the duck.

Grasshopper can secure a place in the quarter-finals, depending on how they fare and Auxerre's result against Ajax in Amsterdam. Turkylmaz, meanwhile, may yet make his comments. He seems to be on something of a break himself; he has not scored in his last 12 games.

Scots oppose re-match in Cyprus

Scotland will resist any attempt by Estonia to stage their World Cup re-match in Cyprus.

The Estonian authorities have chosen the Mediterranean island as their preferred venue for the game, with 11 February the proposed date. But although the date may be acceptable, Scotland want the match staged closer to Britain for the sake of their travelling support.

David Findlay, the Scottish Football Association spokesman, said: "We will resist any attempt to play in Cyprus. We do not see why our supporters should have to make a journey of more than five hours flying time when the original match was only a couple of hours away."

Findlay said the SFA will press for the re-match to be played in southern Spain, southern France, southern Italy or southern Portugal "which are far closer to our supporters".

Australians expect gamble on Venables to pay off

The prospect of Terry Venables as El Supremo of their national football side is being greeted with equal measures of excitement and incredulity in Australia.

Soccer Australia is an organisation with big plans, which extend beyond merely qualifying for the World Cup finals for the first time in 24 years to actually making an impact in France in 1998. But it is also an organisation with such a reputation for poverty that it is widely believed here that it recently had its phone cut off because it was unable to pay its bills.

"That is factually incorrect," said Soccer Australia's public relations officer, Steve Speziale. "Phone lines were being switched over that day and we were far from being the only business cut off."

All the same, news of the £400,000 contract for one of the football world's highest profile operators has startled Soccer Australia. It is money, however, that Soccer Australia believes it will receive.

Venables' first duties with the national side will be during a four-team tournament here next January, involving Norway, South Korea and New Zealand. His mere presence is confidently expected to double the gates for that series of matches



Terry Venables (left) is the new manager of the Socceroos. So what has been the reaction to the appointment Down Under? Dave Hadfield reports from Sydney

as while Venables' influence on the international stage is also predicted to bring in more top-class overseas opposition, with the attendant extra revenue from better crowds and television rights.

"People think about what it's going to cost to bring a person of Terry Venables' calibre to Australia, but they don't acknowledge the other side of the equation – the fact that it's also going to bring in money," said Speziale.

In a country where three other codes of football have deeper roots – even the Soccer Australia chairman, David Hill, who clinched the Venables deal in Britain, is a refugee from rugby league where he used to run the North Sydney club – the other significance of the appoint-

ment is symbolic. "The signing of Terry Venables is a statement about where Australian soccer wants to go," said Speziale. "Where it wants to go first and foremost, is to France, although it should not really require a Venables to get them there. Their Oceania qualifying group pitched them against Tahiti and either the Solomon Islands or Tonga and they must then play the fourth-placed Asian side."

That opens up the possibility of a further European adventure for a Socceroo squad already largely based on the opposite side of the world from home.

There are now more than 20 Australians playing professionally in England – ranging from Premiership regulars like Mark Bosnich and Robbie Slater down to the likes of Steve Richards of the Warrington Wolves and Leyton Orient – and a total of almost 200 in Europe as a whole.

That makes Venables' desire to retain his English base a positive advantage, although Soccer Australia was at pains yesterday to stress that he will not be an absentee coach and will spend 45 per cent of his time in Australia. His time, both at home and abroad, will also be devoted to a battle for credibility for the game.

Although Soccer Australia has tried desperately hard to downplay the ethnic base upon which most clubs here have been built and which led to frequent crowd trouble as old enmities were revived, football here is still perceived as a game for recent immigrants.

Against that, football can claim to be the first code, founded 21 years ago, to have a truly national competition, even though it is often sparsely supported. They bridge here at suggestions that Venables is going into a football wilderness.

FR CARLING PREMIERSHIP			
Mark Bosnich	Manchester United to Aston Villa	£50,000	Free
John Flen	Cambridge to Coventry City	£30,000	
Adam Poric	St George's Budapest to Sheffield Wed	£50,000	
Hobbs Slater	West Ham to Southampton	£250,000	
Chris Coyne	Perth SC to West Ham	£20,000	
Stam Lazaridis	W Adelaide to West Ham	£300,000	
Steve Merson	Carlisle to West Ham	£50,000	

NATIONWIDE FIRST DIVISION			
Andy Paterson	Luton to Charlton	£35,000	
Kevin Muscat	South Melbourne to Crystal Palace	£200,000	
Carl Veart	Sheff Wed to Crystal Palace	£200,000	
Andrew McDermott	Australian Institute of Sport to QPR	Free	
Andy Bernal	Sydney Olympic to Reading	£30,000	

Australians playing in England			
Doug Hodgson	Alex Hedderley to Sheffield Wed	£30,000	
Frank Toffa	Blackburn to Swindon	£150,000	
Steve Corica	Wolves to Luton	£1.1m	

SECOND DIVISION			
Pedro Aguilera	Young Boys Bern to Bristol City	£50,000	
David Dell	Adelaide to Bristol City	£30,000	
James Keaton	Exeter to Bristol City	Unknown	
Lucas Nelli	Australian Institute of Sport to Millwall	Free	
Jason Van Blarik	Go Ahead to Millwall	£300,000	
Stuart Murphy	Perth Italia to North County	£1,500	
Richard Johnson	Widford	From trainee	

THIRD DIVISION			
Steve Riches	US University to Leyton Orient	Free	

Pressman backs foreigners

Kevin Pressman, the Sheffield Wednesday goalkeeper, believes his club's foreign legion can shoot the Owls into Europe if they can continue to come to terms with the harsh demands of the Premiership.

The Dutch duo of Regi Blinker and Orlando Trustfull and the Italian Benito Carbone showed that they have the heart to go with their blend of silky Continental skills on Monday night as David Platt's side ended a run of 10 League and cup games without a win with a 2-0 victory over bottom of the table Nottingham Forest.

Trustfull and Carbone both bagged their first goals for the Hillsborough club, but it was the quality of their performance as much as their finishing power that impressed in South Yorkshire conditions that were more akin to the Arctic than an English autumn.

Pressman insists that Wednesday now have to start setting their sights high since they are back up to ninth place in the table.

"Regi came in and did well last year while Orlando and Benny have come in this season and all three have settled in very quickly," said Pressman, who saw his opposite number Mark Crossley produce a man-of-the-match performance at the other end to keep Forest in a contest in which they were second best throughout.

"Benny is the latest one to arrive and he's doing extremely well. He's settled down very quickly, trying hard to learn English, and has showed that he is a top-class performer."

"It's now just a question of getting that consistency and making sure that we grind out the results when we aren't playing so well."

Trustfull, a £750,000 signing from Feyenoord early in the season, and Carbone, a club record £3m buy from Internazionale last month, finally found the finishing touch that had been lacking in previous outings and which looked beyond Wednesday for 63 minutes last night.

Birmingham must keep it up

Trevor Francis sends out Birmingham searching for a third successive Nationwide First Division win at Charlton tonight aware of his side's tendency to show up against lesser-fancied opposition.

Francis was delighted with City's performance in Sunday's 2-1 victory over Wolves in front of nearly 23,000 fans at Molineux. That followed on from their 3-1 home success over the leaders, Bolton, which attracted 17,000 fans in another highly charged atmosphere at St Andrews. But Francis knows just how important it is for his side to come up with the goods in the less glamorous-looking games, particularly on their travels.

City have produced inept performances in a succession of away matches at Oxford, Portsmouth and Port Vale which have undermined their promotion credentials. However, after an away win against Wolves they are now looking to relaunch their campaign to climb into the Premiership.

"I was very pleased with the way we performed at Wolves. It was our first away win of the season. The confidence was there after the win over Bolton and we came through another test in front of a big crowd. But at Charlton there will probably be eight or nine thousand fans at the game and it will be different circumstances. There obviously won't be the same kind of atmosphere as on Sunday," Francis said.

"We've played in front of similar sized crowds in a few recent away games and not performed at our best and the team has to learn to win in small stadiums. The important thing to remember is that there will still be three points to play for whatever the size of the crowd and I will be looking for the same kind of performance as on Sunday."

There are unlikely to be any changes from the side, with the former Everton defender Gary Ablett set to be on the substitute's bench.

After Birmingham's success the Wolves manager, Mark McGhee, aims to pick his team

up for tonight's trip to Stoke City, hinting that he will move back into the transfer market unless his players start producing the goods. The defeat means Wolves have taken only nine points from 10 home games and they have had to rely on their away form to keep them within touching distance of the promotion pack.

McGhee said: "There is no crisis here. It is only a crisis in that we are ninth and we would want to be higher. It won't be a crisis if we can take four to six points from our next two games at Stoke and Crystal Palace. I still think we can get things right and if it is with the players already here, then fine, but if not, we need to add one or two then so be it. There is nothing I can do if the players are not prepared to take what we do on the training ground into a game."

Steve Corica has been recalled to the squad and the former England midfielder Geoff Thomas is in contention to start his first game for 20 months after a series of knee problems.

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